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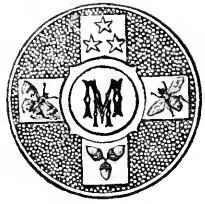

Theol.

SERMONS

PREACHED IN

CHELTENHAM COLLEGE CHAPEL.

BY

GEORGE BUTLER, M.A.

VICE-PRINCIPAL OF CHELTENHAM COLLEGE; LATE FELLOW OF EXETER COLLEGE, OXFORD.

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TO

MY MOTHER,

THIS VOLUME OF SERMONS

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PREFACE.

The following sermons were delivered at intervals from the opening of the College Chapel, in 1858, to the last Sunday of the Christian year, in 1861 ; a period which has witnessed the successful termination of the Indian mutiny, the French campaign in Italy, the liberation of Sicily and Naples, the establishment of a kingdom in the Peninsula of Italy, the disruption of the American Union, and the deaths of many eminent men. It just stops short of that calamity which has recently plunged the nation into mourning for the loss which has befallen our beloved Sovereign, and which is felt as a heavy visitation by all orders and degrees of men throughout the land.

Occasional references are made in some of the sermons to these events ; not only with the view of interesting a young audience in the events of the time, which we are bound to regard as under the providential disposal of

the Almighty, but with that of widening the sphere of practical religion, and bringing under its domain some of the moral, political, and intellectual questions of the day.

In introducing into a volume of sermons subjects which are commonly considered secular, I hope that I have borne in mind their due subordination, and that I have not by their introduction sacrificed any vital principle of Catholic and Evangelical truth.

Holding an office in Cheltenham College which excludes me from other ministerial work, and lays upon me no ministerial duties, I have from time to time been permitted, by the kindness of the Rev. T. P. Boultbee, Theological Tutor and Chaplain to the College, to occupy his pulpit. To him my best acknowledgments are due, both for the confidence he has reposed in me, and for the privilege, which I have always valued most highly, and without which I should not have remained so long in my present position, of addressing the boys amongst whom my life is spent on subjects of more enduring interest than those which form the basis of our studies.

I commend this volume of sermons to those who have listened and worshipped with me, conscious of their many faults and deficiencies, yet desirous to show my affectionate regard for all members of the

College, both young and old; and with a heartfelt prayer that a word here, and a word there, may touch a chord in some readers' hearts which will vibrate with spiritual pulsations, and produce greater harmony, and joy, and peace.

Would that we all, teachers and taught, parents and children, clergy and laity, were more filled with the love of Christ! Education would then be simpler and more efficacious. Knowledge would be sanctified by love. And the cares and anxieties, the toil and labour, the "changes and chances" of this mortal life would touch but lightly those whose chief aim and desire would be to do the will of God, and to work while it is called to-day.

That His Holy Spirit may bless the word, and make it effectual as a means of winning souls to Christ, is my sincere and humble prayer.

G. B.

Priory House, Cheltenham,
3d April, 1862.

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I.

ON THE TRUTH AND EFFICACY OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

"*The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*"—HEB. IV. 12.

FEW things are of greater importance to the Christian than a conviction of the truth and efficacy of the Holy Scriptures. In them is contained the record of the creation of the world, and of mankind; the revelation of God's dealings with His creatures, or what is called the scheme of His moral government of the world; and, lastly, the great scheme of man's redemption effected by Jesus Christ. All these revelations, relating to the Nature of God, the outward manifestations of His power, and His dealings with man, are called by one term, "the Word of God."

If such be the Word of God, it is surely our duty, my brethren, to weigh well the greatness of the gift committed to us, and the extent and manner of its mighty workings. Surely to refuse to hearken to the voice of God our Creator, to neglect a revelation from heaven, is the greatest guilt a human soul can incur! And, seeing

that the fuller and brighter the light is, the greater is the folly of those who shut their eyes to it; so will our condemnation, if we neglect the revealed Word of God in these last times, far exceed that of the world which perished by the flood, or of those who "died without mercy" under the Mosaic covenant. "For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall we not escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven."[1]

Before proceeding further, let us inquire more particularly what is the meaning of the expression, "The Word of God."

In the passage of the Epistle to the Hebrews from which the text is taken, it undoubtedly means the Gospel, which was preached first to the Jew and then to the Gentile. The Scriptural meaning of the phrase is not, however, confined to the Gospel. The Word of God was variously conveyed to man at different times, sometimes by a voice from Heaven, and sometimes in visions to the prophets. Nevertheless, it is *One* Word: one gradually increasing revelation of the Nature and Will of God, and of His dealings with man, beginning in the first chapter of Genesis, and going on to the last sentence of the Apocalypse. This is perfectly expressed in the words, "God, who at *sundry times* and in *divers manners* spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."[2]

God was ever the speaker. The Word of God,

[1] Heb. xii. 25. [2] Heb. i. 1, *seq.*

however spoken, or *whenever*, is one and indivisible. The imperfect communications which had been vouchsafed at long intervals, in broken sentences and dark utterances, were all bound together and brought to light in Christ; their harmony, and connexion, and true meaning were then brought out, and the unity of the Word established.

This will appear more clearly from a review of the chief revelations which God vouchsafed to give of Himself—

I. In patriarchal times His communications were made to individuals. The Word of the Lord came to Noah, to Abraham, to Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. For above 1,500 years the Word of God was made known through the mouths of a succession of prophets. Although spoken only to a few chosen individuals, the Word was not lost or concealed. Every such communication is recorded not only for the generations which have passed away, but for us also, "on whom the ends of the world are come." "All Scripture," beginning with the word spoken to the serpent—that prophecy so pregnant with consequences to the whole human race, "given by inspiration of God, is also profitable for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

II. The second period, the Mosaic, differs from the first, in that the Word was not confined to one or two persons, but was made known to a whole nation. The Word of God came then more terribly than ever before or since, with thunders, and lightnings, and a thick cloud, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud, so

that the people begged that they might not hear it, lest they should die. Here the commandment was given, which was to be written on the sacred tables, upon their dwellings, upon their garments, and to be ever in their mouths. Hence Moses said, "The Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."[1]

III. Soon after the death of Moses, his writings were collected and carefully preserved among the Jews. Afterwards the Books of Joshua and the Judges, and those of Samuel, were written; and it was to this collection of sacred books, but especially to the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses, that David made such frequent reference in the Psalms. Afterwards book after book was added to the volume of the Jewish Scriptures, which were generally known by the name of the Law and the Prophets. It was from these Scriptures that our Lord reasoned when, after His resurrection, He accompanied His two disciples to Emmaus, and expounded to them the things concerning Himself.[2] These Scriptures received their accomplishment in the life and death of Christ. But, though they have so far fulfilled their work, yet are they not to be rejected by us, as if we had no further need of them. St. Paul says, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope."[3] The writings from which our Lord made such frequent quotations, and which were in St. Paul's time called the Scriptures,

[1] Deut. xxx. 14. [2] Luke xxiv. 27. [3] Rom. xv. 4.

were only the Old Testament writings; therefore these words are sufficient to warn us against any undervaluing of the words of the Old Testament, which "holy men of old spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

But further, after having enumerated to the Corinthians causes which brought God's anger upon the Israelites in their journeyings, St. Paul affirms, "Now these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come."[1] They also appear to us in a clearer light than they did to the ancient Jews; for when Christ, the Sun of Righteousness arose, He shed the light of His beams, not only forwards upon the future, but backward over all the past, and brought to light great treasures in former revelations, which were only darkly guessed by the Jewish Church;[2] while they, in their turn, shed light upon the New Testament writings, for they everywhere testify of Christ, the central Theme of all Revelation.

IV. Since that time, "the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."[3] The Word of God has a higher and more spiritual meaning in the New Testament than in the Old. Christ spake as never man spake, and declared, "The words which I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."[4] Never from the mouth of any seer or prophet, nor from that of the sweet Psalmist of Israel, did the Word of God issue forth in such purity and fulness as from the lips of our

[1] 1 Cor. x. 11. [2] See especially 1 Pet. i. 10—12.
[3] Luke xvi. 16. [4] John vi. 63.

Blessed Lord, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

After the life of Jesus Christ, and the circumstances of His death and resurrection and ascension into heaven had been recorded in the four Gospels, and the history of the Apostolic Church had been written, and full statements of Christian doctrine and precepts of Christian life had been drawn up by the Apostles, and published for the benefit of the Church, the spirit of prophecy was withdrawn. Concluding with the predictions of the divinely inspired St. John, the words of the Book are "closed up, and sealed till the time of the end."[1] There is now no longer any open vision, any further Revelation from on high; therefore the Word of the Lord is precious. To it alone, and to the enlightenment of the Spirit, can we look for all knowledge, light, and guidance in spiritual things.

Let us now consider the properties ascribed to it in the text.

"The Word of God is quick and powerful"—*ζῶν καὶ ἐνεργῶν*. These words would convey to us a fuller meaning, if they were translated, "living and energising, or working, in us." Consider what is meant by this expression, the "Living Word." The proofs of life are endurance, growth, and reproduction, and of all these qualities we have the most wonderful exhibition throughout the whole history of the Christian Church. Let us first take the instance of growth. At the day of Pentecost, we read that three thousand souls were added

[1] Dan. xii. 4.

to the Church, "so mightily grew the Word of God, and prevailed." It was this living property of the Word which was typified in the parable of the grain of mustard-seed; it was this extension of the Gospel which David foresaw in spirit, when he said of the sun, moon, and heavenly bodies, "Their sound is gone out into all lands, and their words unto the ends of the world." In the Acts of the Apostles and the early history of the Church, we learn what an abundant harvest was reaped in a few hundred years. But there were times when the Word ceased to give this evidence of life—namely, growth; when it has been so nearly extinguished as to resemble the smoking flax, rather than a communicating fire—a broken reed, rather than a wide-spreading tree. At such times its vitality has been only the more wonderfully proved. It has risen again, like the fabulous phœnix, from its own ashes; it has, from a single dormant seed, rendered fruitful whole empires. "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore,"[1] saith Christ, who is the Living Word; *therefore* can the Word of God never die.

At various times in the history of the Church, when earthly power and the learning of men have been arrayed on one side, and the preachers of the Word have been few and scattered, living in tribulation and fear, the power of the Word has been wonderfully manifested. Once it could be said, that the world was against the truth, and Athanasius might exclaim, in the words of

[1] Rev. i. 18.

Elijah, "The prophets of Baal are four hundred and fifty, and I, even I only, remain a prophet of the Lord: and they seek my life to take it away."

At the time of the Reformation in England, more was done by the translation of the Word of God into the mother tongue, than by all the exertions of statesmen and labours of divines. "An eager appetite for scriptural knowledge," writes a historian, "was excited among the people, which they would make any sacrifice and risk any danger to gratify. Entire copies of the Bible, when they could only be copied by means of transcribers, were too costly to be within the reach of very many readers; but those who could not procure the 'volume of the book,' would give a load of hay for a few favourite chapters, and many such scraps were consumed upon the persons of the martyrs at the stake. They would hide the forbidden treasure under the floors of their houses, and put their lives in peril rather than forego the book they desired; they would sit up all night, their doors being shut for fear of surprise, reading, or hearing others read, the Word of God. They would bury themselves in the woods, and there converse with it in solitude; they would tend their herds in the fields, and still steal an hour for drinking in the good tidings of great joy."[1]

And in other countries besides our own, beginning from the Alpine valleys, the same longing desire after the Word of Life, when it was translated into living tongues, sprang up, and communicated itself from heart

[1] Blunt's History of the Reformation.

to heart. And when, by the invention of printing, wings were given to the seed, it was wafted by the breath of the Holy Spirit into far distant lands, there to take root, and bring forth fruit, "some thirty, some sixty, some an hundred fold."

The Word of God is also "powerful;" *i.e.* working in our inmost hearts; and "sharper than any two-edged sword;" *i.e.* bringing immediate conviction to the soul. Of this there are very striking instances in the Old and New Testament; such as Samuel's rebuke to Saul, when he announced to him, that the Lord had rejected him from being king over Israel. Nathan's reproof to David, bringing his guilt home to him in the words, "Thou art the man;" and followed by an immediate confession of sin, on David's part. Again, in that most striking scene when our Lord said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her," and they all went out, from the eldest to the youngest, being convicted by their own conscience. Also when Jesus said to the armed men come to take Him, "I am He," and they went backward and fell to the ground. Again, when Paul reasoned before Felix, of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come," and Felix trembled; again, when Stephen was uttering his apology and dying speech, "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart (as by a sharp sword), and gnashed upon him with their teeth;" and more signally than on any other occasion (as showing the power of the Word of God even over the prince of darkness), in the victory which Jesus obtained over Satan in that contest where

the enemy had recourse to the very weapons with which he was foiled, and where we read that, after the Saviour of the world had rebuked the tempter by three successive answers taken from the Word of God, "The devil leaveth Him, and angels came and ministered unto Him."

These are instances of the sharpness of that sword which was tempered in the heavenly armoury of God. Wielded by His Son against wicked men, and against the author of all evil, who could doubt its efficacy? When we contemplate these instances where its power was so triumphantly displayed, we are tempted to indulge a wish that, like as Samuel hewed Agag in pieces before the Lord, so the Messiah might have destroyed all the strongholds of Satan, and cast them down for ever, before He was taken from the earth. But it was not so destined. Jesus having led the way to victory, left each individual Christian to "fight the good fight" with a weapon of which He had tried the temper. He did not commit the establishment of His kingdom on earth to men of surpassing wisdom or power. The power of the Gospel was made more apparent in the weakness of its messengers; for who were they who were chosen to preach it? Not the learned of the earth, nor the wise in human wisdom, but unlearned and ignorant men, through whom the Spirit of God spoke with unequalled power and energy, "not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." "The weapons of our warfare," says St. Paul, "are not

carnal, but mighty to the pulling down of strongholds." The same apostle speaks of "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." St. John, in describing the vision of the Son of Man which he saw in the isle of Patmos, says, "Out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword:" and again, "These things saith He which hath the sharp sword with two edges." And yet again, "Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and fight against thee with the sword of my mouth." This figure of speech is not confined to the New Testament. In Isaiah it is written, "He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword;" and in Hosea, "I have slain them with the sword of my mouth."

Furthermore, the text goes on to say that the Word of God pierceth "even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow." Its wounds are not slight and superficial, producing a momentary smart and afterwards entirely healed. Feel them we must, *now* or *hereafter*. Only there is this difference, that if we suffer from them now, if we feel the sword of the spirit piercing to our inmost soul, finding us out in our sin, making us conscious of our lost condition, causing us to loathe ourselves and tremble at the wrath of God which we have provoked—there is "balm in Gilead," there is a remedy for sin, there is a Physician who can heal our sickness, and restore us to life: but if we are proof against that sword; if we put on hardness of heart, or indifference, as a triple coat of mail, now in this life—we shall awake hereafter to a sense of our

shame, and we shall be judged the more severely for not having judged ourselves. Then will it be too late; not all the balm that grew in Gilead can save us; the Good Physician's door will be closed, and we may knock in vain; He will no longer hear. Nothing will remain for us but the darkness of despair. Our sins will no longer slumber beneath an overlying covering of mirth and self-deception; the eyes of the Spirit will be directed full upon them, and they will rise up before us, a fearful company, each adding to the sentence of condemnation passed against us; and then shall be brought to pass the separation between the animal soul which man shares in common with brutes, and the divinely informed rational spirit. The one was qualified to be the victor, yet refused to assume its high privileges; the other was designed to be the subject, yet obtained, by force, a dominion over its rightful ruler. Hence, when the sources of bodily enjoyment fail, there will be an insurrection in the soul—the lower parts craving their accustomed indulgences, and the spirit unable to supply them. What a picture of degradation is this, my brethren. It exists now in those who live only for the world, and the pleasures of sense; but it is a state of half-unconsciousness; hereafter the spirit will be awakened to full consciousness, and then, if not before, will the power of the Word of God be known and felt.

Lastly, the Word of God is "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Not only does it lay bare the evil of the heart, but it

also discerns and recognises the latent yearnings in every human soul to return to its Divine original. The Word of God is a commentary on the whole life of the man who studies it. It is the interpreter of Providence, giving to life, and all its incidents, a meaning which they had not before light was thrown upon them from the source and fountain of all light.

A man "mighty in the Scriptures," reading diligently at the same time from the great book of nature, which God has given to man to read, will excel in his knowledge of the human heart, and be large in his sympathies, calm and wise in his judgment—wise for himself and others—wise unto salvation. Such an one will be able to speak a language, not of one country or of one age, but a language which is of all ages, and of all men, since the beginning of the world; the common language of the great human family. Down in the depths of the heart all men are, in some sense, alike. Have they not *one* need; *one* disease; *one* cure? From the beginning *one* cry has risen up from the heart of suffering, toiling humanity, sometimes feeble, sometimes loud and piercing, and this cry is answered by God's Word. He who has this Word written in his heart, will feel all men to be his brothers. He stands on a broad vantage-ground, where he can sympathise with every human creature. He will be world-wise in the best sense, having read the world's lessons through the Word; but, above all, *heart-wise,* skilful in applying the medicines of the Word to the hurts of the soul.

The kindness of the natural heart does not reach

much beyond the wants of the body; perhaps it may reach to the more human of the affections—but the deep wants of the spirit can be only appreciated by those who have felt them, and have had them supplied by the fulness of Christ. In order, therefore, that we may discern the thoughts of other men's hearts, let us seek to be better acquainted with our own, through the means which God has appointed—the study of His Word. In order that we may find men at home—find them in their inmost hearts—find them in their sorrow and their joy—their hope and their despair—their faith and their unbelief—their natural affections and their spiritual longings—we must have been found *ourselves* by the Word of God. It must have been a "lamp unto our feet," and a "light unto our path," before we can hope by it to give light to others; we must have felt its living energy, and smarted beneath its piercing wounds, before we seek to quicken souls by it, or use against the enemies of the faith "the sword of the Spirit, even the Word of God."

Before I conclude, let me suggest the inquiry, "Why it is, that though quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword," the Word does not bring conviction and life, except to a few. To prosecute this inquiry fully would require a longer time than remains to us. But a brief answer may be given as follows:—

Two things are required to render the Word of God effective towards the conversion of the soul.

I. Faith in the hearer. We read of the Jews under the old covenant: "The Word preached did not profit

them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." So will it be unto the end of time.

II. The operation of the Holy Spirit. There must be a supernatural agency working in our hearts, and keeping alive in us the perception of spiritual truths.

We cannot, dear brethren, lay too much stress on this office of the Holy Spirit. It is the neglect of this truth, I believe, which makes the reading of the Bible a really unprofitable matter to many of us. It is from the habit of depending on ourselves, "leaning on our own understanding," and from the want of earnestly seeking the Spirit's help, that we linger long in darkness, when we might be already "light in the Lord." We should bring to the study of the Word every faculty—attention, judgment, and memory—but remember that we are all the time absolutely and entirely dependent on the Holy Spirit of God for the removing of the scales from our eyes, and for the conveying of the truth to our hearts. We may master the contents of the Bible as we might those of any other book, but, without Divine illumination, it will never be more to us than any other book.

It is natural to think that if we could, as Mary did, sit at Christ's feet, and hear Him explain the Word, it would be indeed a Living Word to us. But we must remember what Christ said: "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you." "It is *expedient* for you that I go away, that the Comforter may come to you." Here He represented the coming of the Holy Ghost as more than a compensation for His own departure. "*He* shall guide you," He said, "into all truth."

It was not to the first Apostles alone that this infallible guide was promised. We are, equally with them, under the dispensation of the Spirit. We are included among those to whom the Lord said, "Lo! I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." For, if we are true believers, we are of the number of those for whom Christ prayed that "they all might be one;" one in Him, and in the Father, God Almighty. Surely, then, we are in a position to draw living waters from the fountain of all truth. Yet how little do we seem to credit our great, our inestimable privileges! How much we hear about the difficulty of arriving at the Truth. We have the Bible; we have the promise of the enlightening Spirit; we have the command, "Search the Scriptures;" we have the promises, "He shall guide you;" "He shall take of mine and show it unto you;" "He shall testify of Me." This seems a simple matter, yet it is not believed. Men are not humble enough, nor bold enough; not humble enough, inasmuch as they will not lay aside their dependence on human wisdom and submit to the guidance of the Spirit; not bold enough, inasmuch as they will not be assured that, through the leading of that Spirit, they verily and indeed shall, as our Saviour promised, "know the Truth." "Ye shall know the Truth," are His words; and yet, in our day, it seems to many to argue presumption, and a want of humility, to speak thus. While there is a general confession that "conviction" is desirable, it is but too generally—in practice at least—pronounced as unattainable. The power to hold

everything in suspense, even the highest truths, seems to argue some noble qualities of mind. There is an appearance of humility, of patience, in it; a confession of the need of laborious advance, and cautious search. With these appearances, it is to be feared, Satan cheats us. He tempts us by them to slackness and delay in the pursuit of a sure hope, and blinds us as to the fact, so clearly and awfully declared in Scripture, of the great guilt of unbelief. Thus many answer to the Apostle's description of those who are "ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth."

A great philosopher, who had spent his life in the pursuit of truth, after his own method, died with the words, "More light!" Many a heart echoes the wish, "More light!" And why is there not a fuller answer? Why do men still "walk in darkness"? Because the world is saying of truth, of light, "Who shall ascend up into heaven, or who shall descend into the deep, to bring it down from above, or up again from the dead?"—while it is forgetting that "the Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart, even the Word of Faith which we preach;" forgetting that it is written, "The entering in of thy Word giveth light;" forgetting Him who prayed to His Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth; *thy Word is truth;*" and that it is written, "The Word of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

We, with the inspired record in our hands, and the promise of the Spirit's teaching in our ears, still turning away with the unanswered question, "What is truth?" should

be like Pilate inquiring of the Christ who stood before him, "What is truth?" and turning on his heel and walking away without waiting for the answer—blind to the fact that He, whom he had in his hands, was Himself "the Way, the Truth, and the Life." How do these words fall on our ears, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free!" These are comforting words, words of peace and rest, words which give health, and strength, and soundness to him who has realized them. Truth is ever, and shall be ever, revealed to him who, with unwearied diligence, unceasing prayer, and in a spirit of entire dependence on God, seeks for her "as silver, and searches for her as for hid treasures." "Then shall ye seek Me, and find Me, when ye search for Me with all your heart." It is God who speaks these words. What then? If we have found *God*, can we be far from the *truth?*

It is true that the hidden things of God are gradually revealed; that there are mysteries which reason cannot grasp; that in the revealed Word there are many things "hard to be understood," many things too high for us. Faith, like a powerful telescope revealing new worlds to us, and resolving into realities what before seemed only mist, at the same time reveals to us more and more yet unresolved, matters in the counsels of the Most High, which cannot be penetrated. But this is another matter. The Word reveals plainly to us all that we require for present happiness and eternal salvation; it shows us, as clear as day, our own fallen state, and the means whereby alone we can return to God, and be made meet

for His presence; it shows us God manifest in the flesh; it shows us the mind and heart of God, and the manner of His dealings with men; it shows us "things to come." Through the teaching of the Word we may lay hold of and possess Him who is the heart and centre of all truth, who can unravel all difficulties, in whom all mysteries are resolved, all differences reconciled, in whom the "crooked shall be made straight," and "the rough places plain."

The Scriptures are able to make us "wise unto salvation." Let us never be tempted to neglect them while we seek wisdom elsewhere. Let us search diligently till we find in them all that fulness and sufficiency to which so "great a cloud of witnesses" in all times past have testified; and, though now there be much that we see (comparatively) "through a glass darkly," a little patience, and this heaven-sent guide will lodge us securely where we shall see "face to face," and "know even as we are known."

Let us give ourselves up to the faithful wounding of this sharp sword; let us by its clear light examine the thoughts and intents of our hearts, as well as our words and actions, lest with any of us it should be that the love of sin is at the root of our doubts about the truth—lest our deadness to the Living Word be caused by our "loving darkness rather than light, because our deeds are evil."

[*Preached on the first Sunday after the opening of the College Chapel*, 1858.]

II.

OUR LORD'S TRIUMPHAL ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM.

"*All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.*"—MATT. XXI. 4, 5.

IT has been noticed as remarkable, that the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, which is recorded in the passage chosen for the Gospel for to-day, is the only instance of our blessed Saviour's receiving honour from men during the whole of His earthly ministry. This is sufficient to claim our attention. But besides this, our Lord's entry into Jerusalem was the prelude to those great events which we commemorate at the sacred season to which we are drawing near. It is mentioned by all the four Evangelists. St. John fixes the time, namely, that it was on the morrow, *i. e.* on the day after the supper at which Jesus had been entertained at the house of Mary and Martha, when Lazarus, who had just been raised from the dead, was among those who sat at meat, and Martha ministered, and Mary anointed the feet of Jesus. St. John records the fact, that a great number of persons were assembled

on the road from Bethany to Jerusalem; some desirous to see Lazarus, the fame of whose resurrection had gone abroad, and others seeking to kill him, because many of the Jews believed in Jesus on his account.

The crowd who went out to meet Jesus belonged to the former class. They were villagers, who went up to the Feast, and hearing that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, took branches of palms, and went out to meet Jesus, crying, "Hosanna, blessed is He who cometh in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel" (John xii. 13). The word Hosanna means "save now," or "save, we beseech Thee." It is used four times in the New Testament, namely, twice in one verse (xxi. 9) by St. Matthew, once by St. Mark (xi. 9), and once by St. John (xii. 13); in every instance relating to the same occasion. The word has not been preserved by our translators in any passage in the Old Testament; but in Psalm cxviii. 25, "Save now, I beseech Thee, O Lord," the Hebrew expression is identically the same. Where it is joined with the words, "the Son of David," it means, "May God preserve the King, the Son of David;" and "Hosanna in the highest" would mean, "May God, who dwelleth in the highest heavens, save and preserve the King of His people Israel."

Before the crowd met Him, Jesus sent two of His disciples in advance, saying, "Go to the village that is over against you"—probably Bethphage, which St. Jerome says was a little village of the priests on Mount Olivet—"and ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her, on which never man sat, loose him and bring him."

Such an action would naturally awaken surprise; and our Lord, foreseeing this, gave the additional charge, "If any one say, Why loose ye the colt? say, The Lord hath need of him. And straightway he shall send him hither." St. Matthew here inserts, "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet," &c. St. Mark and St. Luke add the literal and exact fulfilment of what Jesus had declared. St. John simply relates that He found a young ass, and took His seat thereon: "As it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion, behold, thy King cometh, sitting upon an ass's colt."

Both he and St. Matthew evidently quote from memory, for they neither give the exact words of Isaiah (lxii. 11), "Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy salvation cometh," nor those of Zechariah, from whom the quotation was probably taken (ix. 9), "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation: lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

The ancient Jews applied this prophecy to the Messiah. Thus one of them says, "Our last Redeemer shall resemble the first, to wit, Moses, who put his wife and sons upon an ass when he returned from Midian to the land of Egypt (Exod. iv. 20); for of the last it is said in Zechariah, 'He is poor, and sitting upon an ass.'" In accomplishing the prophecy of Zechariah, therefore, our Lord would call the attention of the Jews to His Divine mission; and hence St. Chrysostom

urges, that Jesus was their true Messiah, as no other came thus to them.

St. Matthew goes on to say, that the multitude who brought the ass and the colt, put on them their clothes, by way of making a seat or throne of honour for the Messiah. This had been resorted to in former times on the occasion of Jehu's being proclaimed king, and was, doubtless, understood by the Jews in our Saviour's time to belong to the ceremony of appointing a king. Not only did they seat the Messiah on this extemporised throne, but a great multitude spread their garments in the way.

This method of showing honour was by no means peculiar to the Jews, but common to Oriental—and perhaps also European—nations, from the earliest times. It was in this way that honour was paid to the conqueror of Troy, on his return to his palace at Argos, when his faithless queen commanded, "Straight let the way be strewn with purple robes, lest the foot that has trampled on the pride of Ilium should touch the ground." And representations of triumphal processions which have come down to us from ancient times show this practice to have been common. It was joined on this occasion with cutting down branches from the trees, and strewing them in the way, which gave a national complexion and aspect to the ceremony; for this was usual at the Feast of Tabernacles, as we read in the 2d Book of Maccabees (x. 6),[1] "And they kept eight days with gladness, as in the Feast of Tabernacles

[1] Compare also Nehemiah viii. 15.

. . . . therefore they bare branches, and fair boughs, and palms also, and sang psalms unto Him that had given them good success in cleansing His place." On these occasions the Jews were wont to cry Hosanna; and from this form of acclamation the boughs themselves were sometimes named Hosannas.

Lastly, St. Matthew informs us that the multitude cried, saying, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." This is taken from Psalm cxviii. It was universally interpreted of the Messiah. Hence the multitude, in applying it to Jesus, acknowledged Him to be the Messiah, or Shiloh, whom they expected: "Blessed is He that cometh, or was sent, from God." As it is written in St. Luke (xix. 38), "Peace in heaven, and glory in the highest," *i.e.* "Glory and praise in heaven to Him who hath reconciled heaven and earth."

Such were the circumstances of Jesus Christ's entry into Jerusalem. Thus did the King of all the earth deign to receive honour from His peculiar people. How different was His entrance to Jerusalem from that of any earthly conqueror! We know from history with what pomp and majesty a triumphal procession swept along the streets of Rome at this time. Some of you have, doubtless, seen on the walls of Hampton Court Palace, and in our National Gallery, representations of Cæsar's triumph. The eye is there bewildered by the multitude of objects, of stately war-horses, of magnificent chariots, of captives, of elephants, of camels; of the various products of foreign countries, of waving

banners, bearing the initials, then sufficiently meaningless, of the Senate and Roman People; and, lastly, of the Roman eagles, emblems of the power, the swiftness, and rapacity of the conquering nation.

When we turn our gaze from such a spectacle, and fix it on the joyous procession descending the slopes of the Mount of Olives, crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David," what a contrast is to be observed! In the one case we mark the triumph of force, in the other of grace. Even in the assumption of His royal prerogatives, the Son of Man put Himself on a level with His servants and witnesses in the times of old—with Moses, and David, and the kings of Israel, who were contented to ride on asses. When He came to visit His own people, He came in great humility. Though He might have summoned for His use twenty thousand chariots of God, with horses of fire, He contented Himself with a very humble animal, whereon never man had sat, borrowed, it would seem, from a poor man, dwelling by the road-side. How little did the Messiah care, by any external means, to impress the people among whom He came with a sense of His grandeur! What simplicity was there even in His most elaborate pageant! What lowliness in His proudest state! How remarkable a proof of humility this would have been considered in an earthly king or conqueror! It would have been handed down to all posterity, together with the constancy of Regulus, the magnanimity of Scipio, and the clemency of Titus. Yet how infinitely greater than any earthly potentate was He who made His last

solemn entry into the city of Jerusalem, seated on an ass's colt! Judging merely as man judges, we should say, any one who, with unlimited means at command, could content himself with such very humble means of showing his authority, must be very self-denying, or very confident that his greatness could neither receive addition or diminution from honours conferred or denied by the hand of man. Consider for a moment who He was, who was the central personage in that triumphal procession. He was not merely a king, chosen out of the people, though He *was* that; but He was "Son of God, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made." These expressions, which are preserved in the Creeds of Nice and Constantinople, and which were repeated by us to-day, testify to a degree of glory, and might, and majesty, which no human imagination can apprehend or reach to. Let me ask you to try to realize the force of any one of those expressions. Although your human faculties must soon give up the task as vain, you will be in a better position to estimate the greatness of that condescension which could receive from the lowest populace of the conquered Jewish race titles of honour, which they were unable to confirm, and which He, in His all-seeing wisdom, infallibly knew were but the prelude to His suffering and death. Think of Jesus as the Wisdom of God, "which Jehovah possessed in the beginning of His way" (Prov. viii.), and then reflect on the part which He submitted to play in that scene

of the eventful drama of His life which we are considering. Surely, to surround a prisoner on his way to execution—which Jesus knew that He was—with the marks of regal power and authority, and to hail as a king him who is destined to the death of a slave and malefactor, is the lowest depth of mockery—"the very fiend's arch-mock." Yet Jesus would not disappoint His well-meaning and enthusiastic followers and admirers. It was as if He designed to reward them for the faith which they displayed, for their honest reception of the evidence of His Divine power and mission which the resurrection of Lazarus had afforded.

But the condescending humility of Jesus was not shown on that occasion, nor in outward things, alone. Consider what He was in His nature—pure, and perfect, and holy. Yet He submitted to take upon Him our nature, with all its infirmities, and stained as it was by the sins of all mankind from the beginning. He did not come upon earth to enjoy privileges, and immunities from pain and sorrow, which would deprive of its bitterness the cup He had taken upon Himself to drink; but He was in all respects touched with a feeling of our infirmities. Hunger, thirst, weariness of body, cold and heat, faintness, desolation, absence of any true friend to whom He could safely entrust all His secrets, grief on account of His countrymen, vexation at seeing His work undone in a measure by the false professors of religion, contact with sin at every step, and hourly experience of the perverseness of the human heart—all these the Saviour of the world endured, when He left the glory

that He had with the Father before the worlds were made, and for our sakes became poor.

These are familiar truths to us, dear brethren: we have been acquainted with them from our childhood. Perhaps it is owing to our familiarity with them that we so often fail of realizing them. This is not to be done without deep meditation and earnest prayer. At particular times they are brought prominently forward, and our attention is called to them, by the services of the Church. Then it is that they who have tried to fathom their deep spiritual meaning in the privacy of their chamber, with the Bible spread open before them, and with earnest prayer to God for the gift of His all-informing and enlightening Spirit, will enter into the full intention of God's most holy Word, and be enabled to offer up in the congregation the reasonable service, in which will, and intellect, and heart unite, and with which God, who graciously condescends to accept the best that we can offer Him, as if it were wholly good, is well pleased.

At this time we are invited to prepare ourselves to celebrate the return of that season when we commemorate the death of Jesus Christ. And in accordance with that invitation, I have endeavoured to set before you one remarkable feature of His death and sacrifice—namely, His great humility. Surely, my brethren, we may join in spirit with that Jewish multitude who showed to Jesus such honour as they could, and who exclaimed, "Hosanna to the son of David:" "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord." Surely we may tear

from off us the garments of our own righteousness, and cast them down in the dust before the Lord's approach. Surely we may commemorate with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs the onward march of the Captain of our salvation, and swell the bands of His saints who rejoice in His victory. Surely we may carry our thoughts forward, as our heavenly Master did, not only to the grave and gate of death, but to the portals of life and immortality, and to the gates of the New Jerusalem, which will be thronged by ten thousand times ten thousand glorified spirits, when Christ's elect are gathered together on the occasion of His second advent.

Let us, too, shout "Hosanna"—Save, Lord, we beseech Thee. Save us from the darkness of an unenlightened spirit. Save us from the desolation of an unconverted heart. Oh, save us now. O Lord, make no long tarrying. Make all, who were sometime darkness, to be light in Thee. We have seen the wonders that Thou hast done in our time, and our fathers have declared unto us how that Thou hast delivered from the death of sin, those whose souls had known corruption; yea, and that Thou dost deliver. Save, Lord, and hear us, when we call upon Thee. Let our prayers go before Thee as incense, and be accepted as forerunners of Thy mercies.

Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. Blessed art Thou, Son of the most High God, for Thy condescending mercy and love to us sinners. When Thou didst come in the name of the Lord, Thou camest in Thine own name, for Thou wert with the Father from

the beginning. Thy name, O God, is for ever and ever. The sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre. We acknowledge Thee as our Creator, by whom all things were made. We adore Thee as our Preserver, who upholdest all things by the Word of thy power. We bow before Thee as our King and Governor; as over all things; as the Head of the Church; at whose name every knee shall bow of beings in heaven, earth, and under the earth. We praise Thee as the source of all change in the hearts of men; we reverence Thee as appointed to be our judge, when the day shall come when they that are in the graves shall hear thy voice, and shall be gathered before the throne of judgment. Lord, at that day save us, for thy mercies' sake; Lord Jesus, save us, or we perish.

The descent from the Mount of Olives commanded a full view of the city of Jerusalem. Across the Valley of Jehoshaphat rose the steep ascent of Mount Moriah, crowned by the Temple, with its extensive porticos, and its beautiful gate, the objects on which were concentred the feelings of devotion and of national pride, which lived in the heart of every true Israelite. Here the Messiah paused, as He knew that the air, which was now rent with the joyful acclamations of "Hosanna to the son of David," would ere long vibrate to the hoarse sounds of murderous voices, crying, "Away with Him!" "crucify Him!" So He passed in spirit across the vale of Time, and beheld the events which forty years later should come to pass—the environment, and siege, and capture, and final destruction, of the city of Jerusalem,

because it knew not the day of its visitation. A king was offered to the Jewish race—one who came in the name of the Lord—the object of long-continued prayer —witnessed to by all their prophets, ready to bring peace unto His people, and to gather together into one fold all the outcasts of Israel, yet they would not receive Him. "No," they said, "we will have no king but Cæsar."

Therefore came to pass all the things that Christ foresaw. God's Spirit would no longer strive with His rebellious people. He inflicted on them the severest punishments. He gave them up to their own imaginations. Reprobate of God, and eager only for earthly sovereignty; burning to shake off the Roman yoke, the Jews provoked a power which had no mercy—the legendary offspring of the she-wolf of Tiber; and although they displayed in the defence of their city feats of prodigious valour, yet they succumbed beneath the Roman discipline and their own dissensions. The Temple, which seemed destined to endure for ever, was cast down, and not one stone left on another of all those towering edifices on which the eyes of the Messiah rested. Well might His Spirit be moved within Him, and vent itself in the passionate exclamation of grief—"If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that concern thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." Here spoke the prophet and the patriot. In these words some of that deep tenderness which vented itself in the tears and groans of human grief at the grave of Lazarus, burst forth upon the ears of the Jewish multitude. By

many they were, doubtless, unheeded. But God's Holy Spirit suffered them not to fall to the ground. They are recorded by St. Luke, and by him alone.

When Jesus fulfilled the prophecy that the Lord should "come suddenly to His Temple," He for the second time during His earthly ministry asserted His authority by an outward act. He went into the Temple of God, and cast out all them that bought and sold in the Temple, saying, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves." This is the last point in the narrative to which I shall draw your attention. The courts of the Temple were full of persons who got a living by the sale of offerings for sacrifices, and by exchanging, on profitable terms, the money of the Jewish worshippers who came from a distance. Now, we are not to suppose that the mere sale of victims excited our Lord's displeasure, nor yet the presence of money-changers in the outer courts of the Temple; but the utter abandonment to traffic and business of the building which was designed to be a house of prayer for all nations—the exclusive attention paid to money-getting by the sellers and barterers whom He saw. The conduct of our Lord is not a little remarkable. We have followed Him through His triumphal procession, including the pathetic episode of His weeping over the city of David. All at once the meek and lowly Jesus, who had shown His tender love for His country, was clothed in righteous indignation at the manner in which He saw the Lord's house desecrated. His wrath was not confined to remonstrance,

but vented itself in outward acts also. He was not satisfied with upbraiding the money-changers; but He overthrew their tables; as if the majesty of the Lord of the Temple could not be vindicated without the casting down and trampling under foot of the Spirit of Mammon.

Two points are especially worthy of note here: (1) That Jesus appeared to regard a money-getting spirit as a barrier and obstacle to prayer; and (2) that He, who in His nature was mild and gentle, and who had just given the most affecting proof of the tenderness of His heart, was roused by the wickedness which He beheld to anger and vengeance.

(1) Doubtless it is with us, my brethren, as it was with the Jews. If we allow our thoughts to be occupied by secular matters, our prayers will be hindered, and the spiritual part of our nature debased. It is written, "My house shall be called a house of prayer." Have your minds never been diverted from the service of God in church or in your secret chamber, by irrelevant thoughts—about your future profession, of your progress here, or your prospects at the universities?—not to mention other and less innocent objects. Alas! I fear there are few of us who can say that we have prayed without ceasing, never suffering our thoughts to be diverted from their proper object. Yet, after all, why do we assemble here? Is it not to pray to our Heavenly Father, in the belief that His favour rests in an especial manner on those who meet in His house to pray to Him in obedience to His commands? Let us then pray that every thought of our hearts may be fully

bent and fixed on the service which we offer to God; and then we may hope for our acceptance with Him through Jesus Christ.

(2) And lastly, we are called upon to remember that Jesus the Lamb of God is not a being of pure benevolence alone; but that in Him exist together, on the one hand, infinite love and mercy, and meekness and humility, and on the other, wrath and indignation, and vengeance against His enemies. The picture presented to us of the discomfited money-changers, overthrown in the Temple and driven out by the Son of David, will fade away before the awful reality of the scene which will hereafter be manifested of the myriads of self-condemned spirits cowering before the wrath of the Lamb, in anticipation of their just doom.

Pray we that our hearts may be so touched by the spectacle of our blessed Lord's great humility and love, and so softened and purified by the effectual agency of His Holy Spirit, that we may follow Him in spirit through the scenes of His suffering and death; and that by continually mortifying our corrupt affections we may be buried with Him, and also be made partakers of His resurrection, and of everlasting life. May we cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armour of light, that at the last day, when He shall come again in His glorious Majesty to judge the quick and dead, we may rise to the life immortal, through Him who liveth and reigneth with the Father and the Holy Ghost, now and ever.

[*5th Sunday in Lent*, 1858.]

III.

ON THE CHARACTER OF BALAAM.

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!"—NUM. XXIII. 10.

THERE is a natural desire in the minds of all men to end their days well. However they may have wandered away from God during their lives, they cherish a hope that at the last all may be well: that they may return, and confess their sins, and receive pardon and forgiveness through the mercy of God and the atoning merits of their Saviour. Nor is this hope always in vain. There *are* instances of late conversions—of sinners repenting of their sins, and after enduring much agony of mind arriving at a more hopeful state—a state far removed, it is true, from that settled conviction which is sometimes, though not always, the lot of those who have led a life of consistent piety, but still equally far removed from despair on the one hand, or callous indifference on the other. Let us bless God for these instances of His mercy, which show that while there is life there is hope, that the exercise of His free grace is not bounded or limited by considerations of human probability, but that the way of repentance is always

open to the sinner, who confesses his sins to Almighty God with true contrition and purpose of amendment, and who clings to the cross of Christ as his only means of salvation, by which his sins can be done away with, and the wrath of the Almighty appeased.

But it is an undoubted fact that many delude themselves with false hopes of dying the death of the righteous, who have given no consideration to the duty of living the life of the righteous. Of these, Balaam, a portion of whose history was read to you in this morning's lesson, is a type and example. He stands out from all the characters of the Old Testament as a pattern of inconsistency, as one who sinned against light, as an instance of a highly gifted and highly privileged man, who sought to make a gain of the favour of the Almighty, and to turn to his own ambitious purposes the knowledge of future events which God vouchsafed to him for other objects.

In so large a subject we are obliged to make a selection of topics. Those to which I shall draw your attention this morning are what appear to me to be the most central portions of the narrative, and those which are best suited to illustrate the mind of a man who, while violating the command of God, could exclaim, "Let me die the death of the righteous," &c.

Into the antiquarian and supernatural portion of the subject I do not propose to enter. It will be enough for us to assume, on Scripture authority, that Balaam dwelt at Pethor, in Mesopotamia, and enjoyed a high reputation on account of the communications which

God was pleased to make to him of His almighty will. To him the Moabites, alarmed at the destruction of their neighbours, the Amorites, and at the growing power of the Israelites, applied for aid. Balak, king of Moab, requested him to perform an office resembling that of a Roman fetial, and to devote the enemies of the Moabites to utter destruction. Conscious that he was but the mouthpiece of God, Balaam on this occasion waited to consult the Lord, and received a direct intimation not to curse the people, for that they were blessed. Surely, we might think, this would be enough to set the matter at rest for ever. Balaam thought so at first, delivering his message as he dismissed the messengers, faithfully, so far as words went; but how unwillingly the sacred historian says not. Nor does he relate all that passed in Balaam's mind between the first and second embassy. Doubtless many a scheme was pondered by him during the interval for reconciling his duty to God with the gratification of his worldly ambition.

When the second embassy arrived, Balaam's mind was more open to the inducements held out. Again he spoke as the Lord's mouthpiece; but this time he detained the messengers; hospitality, forsooth, required it! How could he dismiss such honourable men? Possibly the Lord may have changed His mind, as men are wont to change: the wish was father to the thought.

A second time the Lord appeared, saying, "Go, but what I shall say unto thee, that thou shalt do."

Now, what was the reason of this permission being granted we cannot certainly determine, but it is probable that God, who knew what was in Balaam's heart, and who discerned therein a preponderance of worldly motives and desires—God, who will not tolerate a divided empire within the heart, but who requires the entire affections of the soul, and undisputed supremacy in the breast of His creatures—gave him up to follow his own heart's lusts. Is not this the reason why God's Spirit will not always strive with man?—that He delights not in a forced obedience, but in the willing allegiance of the heart?

Whether it were a sign of God's favour or of His displeasure, Balaam prepared himself without delay to act on the permission. Early in the morning—lest haply the Lord should change His mind—he saddled his ass, and went forth with the emissaries of Balak: the enlightened believer in the one true God with the idolaters. Full of greed and eagerness for gain as he was, he nevertheless had a sense more than they. He had a *sense of the Infinite.* God had revealed Himself to him in visions of the night, saying, "This is the way in which thou shalt walk." The hopes of earthly dignity must have become an irresistible passion within his breast before he could ever have accompanied those idolatrous princes on so hateful a mission—to curse the people whom the Lord had blessed.

Truly the prophet showed his madness—not only when he sought to kill the beast on which he rode, but when he offered to go back, in order to appease the

angel's displeasure. As if the guilt of meditated sin could be done away with by the sullen abandonment of a half-executed purpose! Even when he offered to return, his tongue only spoke, and the angel, who knew his heart, would not accept his offer. Had he preserved his singleheartedness he might have been an example for men to follow. All hope of that was wrecked. With a covetous heart and divided affections he was not fit for the service of God; but he might be a *warning* to others: therefore God was to use him as a vessel made to destruction.

"Go with the men." This looked like liberty at first. Here let me entreat you to remark that there is a permission more to be dreaded than denial: that God frequently shapes His dealings with us according to the state of our own heart. With the pure He shows Himself pure; with the froward He shows Himself froward. Balaam rejoiced in God's permission. He must now obey God's command.

Note one more point. Pride was, doubtless, a leading feature in Balaam's character. Never was he placed in circumstances so calculated to foster vanity. Selected by a neighbouring monarch as essential to the success of his arms against a foreign nation; solicited by repeated embassies; now accompanied by the princes of the land of Moab, on his way to the court of the king; we may imagine his dreams of aggrandisement, his cordial self-congratulations, centring around one quality which he possessed—the power of divination and prophecy. To this it was that he owed his sudden

elevation. But what a lesson of humiliation was in store for him! The faculty which made kings and princes seek him out; the gift, which, when rightly exercised, would have been a real source of power; this he saw transferred to a brute beast—"the dumb ass, speaking with man's voice, forbade the madness of the prophet." It was not enough that a rival prophet should be raised up: he must learn his lesson from an ass.

And now he has come to Balak, his feeling of self-importance somewhat humbled, and with the remembrance, perhaps, of the drawn sword of the angel before his eyes, causing him to have more regard for the will of God than he had started with. It is not unpleasant to him to be upbraided for his slowness in coming, still less to hear the king hold out prospects of future advancement. The prophet assumes a tone of virtuous moderation. He has learned his lesson well; and it flows as readily from his tongue as a studied impromptu, or as the formal and unfelt confession of humility and faith, which too many professing Christians pronounce every Sunday.

We are next introduced to a scene which for picturesque grandeur is almost unsurpassed in the records of God's chosen people. The prophet accompanies the king to one of the high places of Moab. From one of the highest elevations of that mighty wall of mountains, a portion of the Israelitish host was descried. Together with the sight of their tented multitudes the word of the Lord came to him: reminding him of the

choice of the Almighty, and suggesting the peace and happiness of a nation devoted to the service of the one true God. His conscience tells him that it will be well with them now, and well with them in the latter end. "Let me die the death of the righteous," he says, "and let my last end be like his." There can be no doubt that the desire expressed in this prayer was for the time, at least, genuine. It is not to be supposed that Balaam was unacquainted with the nature of true righteousness. The seven altars, with as many bullocks and rams, were not, he well knew, what the Lord required. Hear how the prophet Micah describes the interview between Balak and Balaam :—

"O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the Lord. Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before Him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (vi. 5—8.)

We cannot imagine that one who was so well instructed himself, so highly qualified to teach others, can have separated the death of the righteous from a righteous life. If the Scripture narrative came to an end here

we might imagine Balaam "doing justly, and loving mercy, and walking humbly with his God;" and afterwards dying in a good old age, pouring forth his last words in the ears of his children; a witness to all that the Lord, who knoweth them that are His, is able to save His servants to the uttermost, and will not forsake them in their last hour.

But it was not so. A later chapter of the Book of Numbers tells us that Balaam was slain with the sword (xxxi. 8), fighting with the kings of Midian against the Lord's people. As he could foretell the prosperity of the Israelites, it is clear that he must have gone to battle against them contrary to his better judgment. Therefore he died the death of the idolater, and the vengeance of the Lord was executed upon him.

Note here two things.

First. The uselessness of praying with the lips for spiritual, or any blessings, without a settled purpose of the heart—a resolution which immediately shows itself in our conduct—to lead a life conformably to the law of God. It is not enough for us to offer up our prayers—sincere though they may be for the time—and then to go away and live as if we had never prayed. God will not accept us because we *pray* with the righteous, unless we *live* with the righteous. It is an easy thing, comparatively, to join in spirit with the congregation of the Lord's people, who are offering up prayers to Him. It is a light thing to approve in our judgment a life of faith in the Son of God, and that reverent obedience to His law, which shall bring a man peace at the last. But

to lead a life in conformity with our prayers; not merely to pray for the Spirit, but to walk in the Spirit; not only to address our Saviour in the words of Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life;" but to take up our cross and follow Christ in all things—this, this, dear brethren, is the labour, this the work which the Christian must propose to himself, and at once take in hand, if he desires to die the death of the righteous.

Secondly. Observe the contrast between a man at his best, and at his worst. Balaam, full of the Spirit, and desirous to cast in his lot with that of the people of the Lord, applies to his own case the conclusion which his better judgment impels him to draw when he gazes on the tabernacles of Jacob. When he said, "Let me die the death of the righteous," he declared in words his settled conviction that there was a happiness on earth preferable to the honours to which the king of Moab sought to advance him, and his desire to be made partaker of that happiness.

What became of this intellectual conviction?—for a moral conviction it can scarcely be called. Alas! it passed away before the stronger attraction of the gold of Balak, and the promotion which he expected from him. We find Balaam twice again endeavouring to win the king's favour, by cursing the people of the Lord, and twice compelled by the Spirit to utter words completely at variance with that intent. The gift of God was not to be bought by money, nor used against the people of the Lord. Balaam, who sought to prostitute

his gift, must submit to its involuntary exercise, and then hear himself called faithless—a prophet of ill, taking the king's money, and failing to execute the king's behests.

But though he could not serve Balak as a prophet, he gave him the benefit of his counsel. And devilish counsel it was, in truth. St. John, in the Book of Revelation, speaks of the "doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit fornication." The sin of the Israelites and its consequences are described in the twenty-fifth chapter of Numbers.

The destruction of 24,000 of God's people was not a light matter: and the Lord commanded Moses to visit it severely on those who had beguiled the children of Israel in the matter of Peor. Of those who fell, fighting with the Midianites against Israel, none deserved his fate more than the disappointed prophet, but too successful counsellor of evil, Balaam the son of Beor.

A few brief words, and I have done. When we assemble in the house of God to confess our sins to Him, and to pray for forgiveness in the name of Jesus; when we are led to approve those things that are most excellent, and mentally to resolve that we will follow them; we do not contemplate the possibility of falling into such an abyss of iniquity, as that into which Balaam fell. If any one should suggest to you now, when you are meditating on God's Word, or when you are kneeling in prayer, that you may hereafter betray a

brother or sister into sin, and seduce a soul from the service of God, would not your indignant and honest answer be, "God forbid that I should do this thing"? Doubtless it would, dear brethren, and God forbid that you should do it; but lest you should be surprised in an unguarded moment: lest you should fall into sin yourself, and then, either by precept or example, for it matters not which, seduce others into sin, remember the first beginning of Balaam's sin, namely, the harbouring of a wrong desire. Then remember how Balaam prayed, how Balaam sinned, and how Balaam died.

Remember, too, that although Balaam was not a true man, he prophesied true words. The star did come out of Jacob, of which he foretold the rising, and the sceptre did arise out of Judah, when the kingdom of Moab had been destroyed, and when Balaam was no longer held in honour as the seer of the East, but had become a by-word for covetousness, for villanous counsel, for sinning against light and knowledge. One other prophecy remains to be fulfilled. "I shall see him, but not now. I shall behold him, but not nigh." Hereafter Balaam shall behold the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven. When all the tribes of the unbelieving world shall mourn because of the rejected Messiah, Balaam shall see Him; assuredly not with joy. How unlike will his exclamation be to that of the righteous, "Lo! this is our God, we have waited for Him, and He will save us!" Rather will he cry to the mountains, "Fall on me," and to the hills, "Cover me, and hide me from the wrath of the Lamb."

We, too, dear brethren, shall see the Son of God hereafter, and be brought face to face before Him at the judgment-seat. With what feelings shall we receive our summons to appear before that tribunal? God grant that we may so live as to be prepared to meet both death and the judgment. God grant that we may avoid all tampering with conscience, and all double dealing, and that we may retain a single eye to His glory.

[*2nd Sunday after Easter*, 1858.]

IV.

ON CONTINUANCE IN PRAYER.

"Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving."—COLOSSIANS IV. 2.

THESE words were addressed by the Apostle to men already in the habit of prayer, who needed not to be taught for the first time, but rather to be reminded of their duty, and exhorted to continue in their Christian course.

A very needful exhortation, surely, my brethren, well fitted for every Christian congregation, who have been taught, and yet need to be constantly reminded of, the duty of prayer and watchfulness.

I therefore propose, by the blessing of God, to draw your attention to the duty of prayer, watchfulness, and thanksgiving enjoined in the text. And may the Holy Spirit of the Most High so rule in our hearts that we may learn His true and perfect will, and indeed fulfil the same, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The words, "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same," are uttered in the true spirit of Him who said, "Watch and pray, lest ye enter into temptation," and who taught His disciples, by the parable of the Unjust

Judge, that "Men ought always to pray, and not to faint." Jesus, who taught His followers no less by example than by precept, was remarkable for the constancy with which He prayed to His heavenly Father; and when He gave His chosen disciples a form of prayer, He gave them such a form as should be suited for daily repetition, and not merely for a single occasion.

And in like manner the Apostle who was commissioned to bear His name to the Gentiles, dwelt most forcibly on the necessity of continuance in prayer. We read in the Epistle to the Romans,[1] "Continuing instant in prayer;" and in another Epistle, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."[2]

We all acknowledge that the beginning of our spiritual life is dependent on God. "No man hath quickened his own soul." It is "God who quickeneth all things." Just as surely as the first breath of spiritual life is drawn from Him, so surely are we every moment dependent on Him for the continuance of that life. If we fully admit this, our next inquiry will be, "How are we to sustain the connexion with Him through which we receive a continued supply of spiritual life?" It must be by the means He has appointed, and none other. He has appointed prayer to be the means by which, so far as our individual efforts are concerned, we receive everything from Him. It is the first of all means, for it is the simple coming to Him, without which we can receive nothing. He who gave us our natural life has

[1] xii. 12. [2] Eph. vi. 18.

made that life dependent on certain laws, which laws if we neglect our bodies will die. Upon the daily use of such ordinary means as food, warmth, exercise, does our natural life depend. Our spiritual life is equally dependent on certain fixed laws, yet we do not act as if we fully believed this, and therefore it is that so "many are sickly among us," and so "many sleep" the fatal sleep which ends in eternal death.

We may calculate, with certainty, the consequences of a departure from these fixed laws in the case of the body. Irregularity or insufficiency of sustenance will produce feebleness, sickness, decline, and, if continued, death. Yet a long disuse of food or neglect of the body may sometimes take place without very bad consequences. Not so with the soul. Who can estimate the effects of a single omission of prayer, a single departure from God?

There is in natural laws a tendency to right themselves, to which there is no analogy in the other case. The natural appetite will become importunate if long denied; but there is not this self-adjusting power in the spiritual life, in whose domain the Fall has left far greater disorders than in the natural world. Every departure from God in the heart is succeeded by a gradual dulness of conscience, a deadness and paralysis of the sense of our want of Him, which, if His holy arm be not stretched out on our behalf, will end fatally for us.

We cannot suppose that David's threefold sin of adultery, treachery, and murder succeeded immediately

upon a prayerful, watchful, holy walk with God, such as he at other times maintained. No doubt there had begun long before a preparation for this terrible lapse. Some security, or weariness in God's service, or some neglect of secret prayer, may have been the first step which led to this overthrow. We may be sure the defection had begun at his heart, and that this was but the climax and outward manifestation of the secret backslidings known only to God. Great need have we to beware of ever neglecting prayer! One step is easily lost, not so easily regained, and that step may lead to another, and yet another, till return is well-nigh impossible.

Besides perseverance in prayer we need fervour. That alone will keep our prayers from becoming a mere form. We are not heard for our much speaking, if it be the speech of the lips only, and not of the heart. We have indeed cause to pray for the "spirit of grace and of supplication;" such a spirit as will make prayer become our greatest delight and joy; as will change it from a formal expression of our wants into a delightful communion with God; as will enable us to feel that while we are speaking to God, He is speaking with us; such a spirit as this will cause prayer to become the fixed habit and natural attitude of the soul.

Not only at stated times must we shut to our door, and putting forth all worldly thoughts, pray fervently and with continuance to our "Father which seeth in secret," but we must learn what occasional prayer is; that momentary lifting up of the soul to God, which precedes,

or should precede, all important action, that prayerful mood which realises at all times the presence of God, without which we shall be in danger of returning to our stated devotions with clogged and lifeless spirits, conscious that we have been living to ourselves and forgetting God, and with little returning relish for that holy exercise.

What true Christian is there among you who has not experienced the need of spiritual watchfulness? Who has not fallen again and again into sin, from the want of vigilance against the enemy of our souls? We all of us need to be reminded of the duty of watching against sin, especially against any known *besetting* sin, which has frequently been a cause of our stumbling. Whether it be a sin of temper or of evil appetite and desire; or, in young people, levity, or personal vanity, or dislike of restraint; in older people, care and anxiety for this world, or selfishness and indifference towards others; whatever it be, it must be watched against as a most vigilant and ever-returning foe. Evil habits, though they may appear small in themselves, do by their continual returning upon us, by their adhesiveness and tenacity, threaten our souls' happiness and salvation. They are like the "little foxes which spoil the vines," and render the vineyard unfruitful. The constant vigilance required of us must not discourage us, for it will become a habit if persevered in, and each victory we gain through the Divine grace, will make future victories more easy.

My brethren, some of you are set in watch, not only

for your own souls, but for the souls of others. Not only Christ's ministers, but parents and teachers, have this office committed to them. They are placed like sentinels, to guard against the coming of the enemy. Now in sentinels, it is required that a man be vigilant. The safety of the army depends on them; they may not leave their post, nor take their rest. Desertion and falling asleep are alike punishable by death.

Judge ye, what a weight of responsibility lies on the sentinels of the Lord's army!—first on his ministers, next on all those who have others dependent on them. What an inducement, too, is held out to us to watch! It is not only *against* the *enemy*, but *for* the *bridegroom*, that the saints of the Lord on the earth have to watch. For as they know not when Satan may assault the camp, so they know not at what day, nor at what hour, the Bridegroom cometh.

And we are all of us included in the same general order, "What I say unto you, I say unto *all*, Watch!"

We must watch, therefore, not only against spiritual dangers, but for every opportunity of doing good. How often do we let slip occasions of serving our Lord, an doing good to the bodies or souls of men!

All our words and acts are, in their effect and influence upon others, as so much seed sown. Alas, could we *see* the effect of all the words we have spoken in our lives, what a mixed harvest would the best of us reap of our own sowing!

If we were more watchful, how many a time should we find it possible to speak a word for Christ, without

bringing in what we have to say in an irrelevant or presuming manner! How often might we gently rebuke sin, or strengthen a weak believer, or give opportunity to others, more advanced than ourselves, to communicate of their grace to us! Many of us are apt to indulge in a dreamy, absent, unawakened mood, which is unfavourable to godliness. We should be thoroughly awake, ever sensible of our responsibility to God and man; always alive to the fact that every human being we meet in our earthly pilgrimage, whether good, bad, or indifferent, in whatever relation they stand to us, is our brother or sister, and demands a duty at our hands —demands that we should (according to our opportunity) watch to do them good, as well as to avoid putting hindrances in their way, by careless words or actions on our part.

Again, we are to watch *with thanksgiving*—thanksgiving for the privilege of addressing God in prayer—thanksgiving for His continued mercies, and unbounded love. Just as we are to "pray without ceasing," so we should give "continual thanks" for those mercies which "fail not, but are new every morning." It is not enough that we should give way to a transitory emotion, and vent our occasional feelings or our passing enjoyment of some of God's good gifts in fitful ejaculations; but we should *ever* bear in mind what great things the Lord hath done for us, and imitate the Psalmist, who not only declared this resolution, but his determination to adhere to it—"I will bless the Lord at *all times;* His praise shall *continually* be in my mouth."

Even in seasons of darkness—whether from the withdrawal of the sense of God's favour, or the pressure of earthly care and sorrow—if Christians would always try to call to mind the reasons they have for thankfulness, to dwell upon the goodness and love of God, and remind Him of all His former lovingkindness and tender dealings towards them, if they would take down the harps they had hung upon the willows by the side of the deep waters of their grief, and, however feebly, attune them to a song of praise to God—of praise for all that He has done, all that He has promised to do—they would find the cloud withdrawn, and the heart gradually lightened. The very recounting of God's mercies would bring a clearer view and more grateful sense of those mercies to the soul, and they would many a time, with David, end their grievous complaint in a burst of praise. There is, perhaps, no Christian duty so much neglected as that of thanksgiving.

> "Many say, The Lord be pitiful!
> Who never said, The Lord be praised!"

For one who returns with the Samaritan leper, to give glory to God for benefits received, there are nine who go their way, and forget their Benefactor. It is an excellence which few attain to—that excellence of the "man after God's own heart."

There are, indeed, few who in the full extent and meaning of the term, as applied to our limited human capacities, *know God;* and those who know Him not, cannot praise Him; for they know not that He is a God of Love, the Author of all their good; or if they know

it in a speculative manner, they do not feel it. God appears to them in the aspect of an offended judge, not of a loving father; none but those who are reconciled to Him can praise Him from the heart.

But what an inducement we have to praise the Lord! God hath said, "He that offereth Me praise glorifieth Me;" and it is written, "Praise is comely for the righteous." And has not our God given us the "garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness?" Has He not put a "new song into our mouth," even the "song of the Lamb?" And shall we still go heavily all our days? Surely, dear brethren, we shall not, if we believe that Christ died for our sins, and having overcome death, ascended up into heaven; and that He has gone to prepare a place for His faithful people, that they may dwell with Him for ever, as partakers of everlasting life.

As of the three great Christian graces, faith, hope, and charity, it is written, "the greatest of these is charity," for it alone endures for ever; so of these three duties, prayer, watchfulness, and thanksgiving, it may be said the greatest of these is thanksgiving, for when our prayers are all fulfilled, and our vigilance is rewarded with security and rest, thanksgiving will continue to be our blessed employment throughout eternity.

Such an employment of our faculties is surely one of the most exalted that we can conceive. Thereby the soul is brought nearer to God. Thereby we hold communion with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven: with those whom the Evangelist heard saying—"We give Thee thanks, O Lord God almighty,

which wast, and art, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee thy great power and hast reigned."[1]

Herein, too, we imitate our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, who came to be unto us a pattern of good works. He, although He knew His Father's will from the beginning, thought it not superfluous to pour out His soul in thanksgiving to God, saying, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for that Thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."[2]

In such a course of watchful prayer and thanksgiving did St. Paul charge the Colossians to continue; and there is no member of Christ's Church militant here on earth, to whom his words do not apply. They are addressed to each one of us. They address themselves to young persons who are entering upon their Christian course, and who are naturally ardent, and more ready to take up anything than steadfast in continuance: to grown-up persons, who often find the cares of the world choking the good seed which was sown within them, and hindering the life of the soul: to the old also, who are bound by every tie of gratitude to continue to serve Him who has so mercifully preserved them all their lives, and are concerned in making their peace with the King and Judge of the whole earth, into whose presence they are hastening.

Let not any secular work or occupation hinder us from the discharge of this duty. Even at the most busy moments, in the most engrossing professional duties,

[1] Rev. xi. 17. [2] Matt. xi. 25.

you will be able, if you make it a matter of principle, to devote a portion of your time to calling upon that God who heareth prayer. And let that be, if possible, in the morning—before the cares of the world and the business of the day have come upon you in a flood. You can hardly be more occupied than Daniel was, when he was minister of the king of Babylon; yet he prayed thrice a day to the God of his fathers. You can scarcely have more pressing, more engrossing calls upon you than the hero of Cawnpore and Lucknow, the avenger of the innocent, the deliverer of the helpless. Yet he devoted two hours at the beginning of every day to prayer and study of the Word of God. If the army was ordered to march at six, he rose at four; if at four, he rose at two.

Such instances of perseverance in habits of devotion are encouraging to the weak believer, who has not strength to take Jesus Christ for his example, but thinks that what a mere man has attained to, he may possibly compass. God grant that some of you may be moved by such examples. But beware of resting in these. No human standard of attainment has the same power to attract and elevate the soul, that the example of Christ has. Of Him only can it be said, "If I be lifted up, I will draw all men to me."

The statesman and prophet of the East, and the Christian warrior of the West, are laid in their graves, and can only influence us by their examples. We may, perhaps, be roused to greater earnestness in devotion by observing that men of great ability in the

council and in the camp were men of prayer; but will these recollections fill us with that sense of our own deep sinfulness in the eyes of God, and our personal need of the atonement of Christ, and of the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, which are necessary conditions to effectual prayer? Will the record of human efforts to be united in heart and mind to God bend our wills, even if it should convince our understandings, to the resignation of ourselves, our souls and bodies, to the will of God, so that when we pray, "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth," our hearts and minds shall be fully fixed and bent on the accomplishment of that for which we pray? Assuredly not. Nor will the contemplation of human excellence exalt our affections, or quicken our heavenward aspirations, in the same degree as the contemplation of God in the purity of His threefold essence, as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; nothing short of this will raise your thoughts above selfish and worldly objects, and help you to overcome spiritual sloth, and the active influence of evil from without and from within, and the subtle agencies of Satan, sometimes whispering peace when there is no peace, and sometimes leading you to despair of any real advance in holiness. Nothing but a realisation of the presence of a just, and holy, and sin-hating God, and a clear perception of the danger incurred by each instance of unrepented sin, and a knowledge of the way of salvation through Christ, who alone is able to reconcile us to our heavenly Father whom we have offended, and humble faith in the efficacy of prayers offered in His

prevailing name, and a desire to be conformed to His image through the sanctification of the Holy Ghost, can enable us to continue in such prayer as God delights to hear and answer.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be shed abundantly upon you all, and dispose you to strive after such continuance in prayer, such watchfulness *against* evil and *for* good, and such a thankful spirit, as the text exhorts you to.

Especially for those who have recently made a public profession of their desire to serve God, and to live according to His will, I would pray, in the words of the Apostle, that "He which hath begun a good work in you may perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."[1]

And may His Holy Spirit confirm and strengthen you in all goodness, and enable you to persevere in the work of the Lord, knowing that "he that shall endure to the end, the same shall be saved."

[1] Phil. i. 6.

[*Sunday after Ascension*, 1858. *Shortly after a Confirmation.*]

V.

ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ST. LUKE'S GOSPEL.

"*The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*"—LUKE XIX. 10.

AMONG the burning and the shining lights to whom we owe, under Divine Providence, our enlightenment in things spiritual, is the Evangelist St. Luke, of whose gospel I have selected the text as characteristic. Let me draw your attention this morning to some of the leading features of that gospel, which has been selected as a subject of study for some of you during the present term.

Beyond the facts that St. Luke was a native of Antioch, a physician by profession, companion of St. Paul in some of his journeyings, and author of the gospel which bears his name, and of the Acts of the Apostles, little is known of him personally. Though, however, we have so little information respecting the man given us in Scripture, yet we may imagine his character from his writings. Whether he were by birth a Jew or Gentile, his sympathies were with the Gentiles, or rather, embraced all men. None of the Gospels has a more distinctive and marked character, and that character is one which we, as Gentiles, resting our claims for eternal

salvation on no exclusive promises, but on promises which embrace the whole world, even all who believe, are bound to recognise with grateful acknowledgment. It is, indeed, a subject for deep thankfulness, that human elements and human character are allowed to enter so largely as they do into the divinely inspired records. By this means our hearts are touched, and our sympathies enlisted in the cause of Divine truth. We are bound also to acknowledge the wisdom of God, as shown in the manifoldness of Scripture, especially in the fourfold aspect of the Saviour of the world, and in the story of the world's redemption, given us by the four Evangelists.

St. Matthew appears to us in the pages of his gospel as a complete Jew, writing for Jews—"a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers." He shows Christ to his countrymen as the son of Abraham, the king of the Jews, in order to draw off the narrow minds of the Jews from their temporal privileges, and from the visions of an earthly sovereignty, which would recall the times of their greatest prosperity, to the expectation of a heavenly king, and a spiritual kingdom, of which only the seeds should be sown on earth, and of which the fruits should not be gathered in until the fulness of time should come.

St. Mark reveals Him as the servant of the Lord. His Gospel is a record of His active ministry. Little is recorded of our Saviour's words by him. He is supposed to have written under the guidance of St. Peter; and his gospel is eminently characteristic of a disciple of Peter: brief and vigorous, full of details of our Lord's

daily life, and presenting a stirring picture of His course of active service, and of His all-conquering energy and might.

St. John was fitly signified by the soaring eagle in the vision of Ezekiel, whose eyes were strengthened to behold the highest mysteries—to follow the "Master" into heaven: to behold Him as the eternal "Word," existing from the beginning. His is a gospel in which "the higher speculative tendencies, which were given to man not to be crushed or crippled, should find their adequate satisfaction." In his Gospel are unfolded the mysteries of Divine love, and of spiritual union between the creature and the Creator by the medium of the incarnate Son of God. He, the beloved disciple, drew near enough to the bosom of our Lord to learn His deeper secrets from His lips; and His pen has written for our comfort and edification the fullest records of the discourses of Him who spake as never man spake.

But St. Luke is he with whom we have to do to-day. Two great characteristics of his gospel are expressed in the text.

I. In the title, "The Son of Man," applied to the Son of God, expressing as it does the complete human nature of Christ, and incidentally the human character of St. Luke's Gospel.

II. In the announcement that He "is come to seek and to save that which was lost," expressing primarily the all-embracing nature of the design of Christ, the Friend and Saviour of man, and secondarily, the universality and comprehensiveness of St. Luke's Gospel.

It is to these that I would now, by the blessing of God, dear brethren, direct your attention. And may His Holy Spirit be imparted to us severally, that I may be enabled rightly to set forth, and you to receive, the truth, according to the full intention of His most holy Word.

I. The exordium, or preface to St. Luke's Gospel, addressed to Theophilus, is quite in keeping with what I have stated to be its general character. It is thoroughly human. It resembles a letter to a friend. In this respect, it presents a marked contrast to the three other Gospels. How different is it, for instance, from the majestic opening of St. John's Gospel, which carries back our mind to the record of the creation in the first chapter of Genesis. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." There is a mystery about these, and the following sentences, which is not solved until the Evangelist tells us "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." However clear this revelation may be, it cannot be denied that it sets forth the Divinity of the Messiah after a superhuman and unearthly manner. It is the writing of one who has been taken up into the third heaven, and has been taught things which the mind of man uninspired could not attain to.

The gospel of St. Luke proceeds more after the manner of an ordinary history. We need not pause to inquire who Theophilus was, whether he was a Roman governor living at Antioch, or in Greece, or Egypt—all of which

views have their supporters—or whether he was son of that Annas, who was high-priest at the time of our Lord's crucifixion, and who had filled that high office himself, which is stated on a very ancient authority; suffice it to say that St. Luke thought him of sufficient importance, and sufficiently interested in the subject on which he wrote, to address both his Gospel and his narrative of the Acts of the Apostles to him. He writes to Theophilus, as having received instruction in the facts of Christianity from many sources. These can hardly be the gospels of St. Matthew and St. Mark, for Luke would never have cast a slight upon the writings of an Apostle, and one so nearly related to an Apostle, as Mark was; nor would he have spoken of two narratives as the writings of many. His words, doubtless, refer to some of the spurious gospels of which in some cases only the titles, in others, a portion of the contents, have come down to us. Not wishing that Theophilus should receive an account of Jesus Christ's life and death, in which truth might be mingled with falsehood, or the order of events confused, St. Luke undertook to give him a true, well-arranged, and authentic narrative of all the events connected with the birth and education, the ministry and passion, the resurrection and ascension of the Saviour of mankind.

Regarding Theophilus apparently as one who represented a large class of mankind, he addressed him in a style which would command the attention of a large number of readers. Every true man values accuracy

in matters of history, and St. Luke—who might have put forth a claim to Divine inspiration—puts forth the lower, but more readily admitted claim of trustworthiness, on the ground of "having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first."

In the first two chapters of his Gospel, St. Luke describes the birth, infancy, and childhood of the Son of Man. What a strong contrast this presents to St. John's Gospel. How clearly the human element is brought out; nay, how it predominates in this part of the narrative. And how suitable this is to win the hearts of men. Christ, as God alone, would be too high for us to conceive. Mark the infinite tenderness and condescension of God, shown in the picture of our Lord as a helpless infant, wrapped in swaddling clothes, nursed at a woman's breast, weeping childish tears, going through all the gradual stages and the sufferings of infancy, subject to parents, under human laws. In this Gospel He is almost invariably styled "Son of Man." We behold Him as He walked and talked; as He held social intercourse and sat at meat in the houses of rich or poor; as He looked, and as He prayed; the second Adam; in all respects a man; though perfect God, yet perfect man; a High-Priest taken from among men, "that He might have compassion on the ignorant, for that He Himself also is compassed with infirmity."

Throughout the same Gospel, but especially in the early chapters, we are introduced to relationships and sympathies which are common to all, which speak home to all, and which are as wide as the world in their com-

prehensiveness. St. Luke was supposed to have got many of the details relating to the birth of the Holy Child from the Virgin Mother herself. At the time when he wrote, women were degraded throughout the Gentile world. Here, in the opening of his Gospel, St. Luke presents a picture of womankind so gracious, so noble, and so sacred, as to produce, by its silent influence, a revolution in the estate of woman, one which shall last through the ages to come; exalting her through her humility, and in this, as in other things, proclaiming the Gospel's work on earth, "Behold, I make all things *new*."

II. In the first chapter of St. Luke we have the three inspired songs which foreshadow the breaking down of the barrier of national privileges jealously guarded by the Jewish race; and already foresee the Light which should lighten the Gentiles, and give light to them who sit in gross darkness; who should break forth as the sun going forth out of his chamber, delighting to run his course, and illuminate the uttermost parts of the earth, as well as be the glory of His people Israel.

Here Mary proclaims her Divine Son, not as the Messiah, but as the benefactor of the whole human race; as the bestower of unmerited blessings, in freest bounty and richest abundance, to the poor, the outcast, and the lost; putting down the mighty from their seat, and lifting the beggar from the dunghill—sending the rich empty away, and filling the hungry with good things. Here the Gentile reader, whether Theophilus or an Englishman of the nineteenth century, may see

his friend—the friend of the whole human family—the man Christ Jesus, who cried, "Look unto me, all the ends of the earth;" and the Gentile believer may claim Him in the words of His Hebrew disciple St. Thomas, "*My* Lord, and *my* God." He will so claim Him, if he feels that he himself is one of those lost ones whom the Son of Man came to seek and to save. They alone who have the inborn conviction of their natural alienation from God; who know and feel themselves to have been "afar off," wanderers, "sitting in darkness and the shadow of death;" they alone can enter into the joy of those holy prophets and prophetesses, who hailed with bursts of rapture the advent of the Lord to His poor and long-forsaken Gentile Church.

There were certain to whom Christ said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." So there be many now to whom He says, "Ye are whole, in your own estimation; I came not to heal you, but the sick." It is *sinners* who were to show forth His glory among the Gentiles. He is chiefly glorified in showing mercy, in the freedom and magnificence of His gifts, in gathering together, in healing, in raising up from the dust of death, in cleansing the very dregs of society.

How glorious is the Redeemer in His character as the Saviour of a lost world! "Therefore," saith the Lord, "I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because He poured out His soul unto death." And how glorious is the vision of that elect company gathered together from all the ends of the earth; the lost, scattered, and forsaken, whom

the prophet saw in spirit when he cried, "Who are these that fly as a cloud, as the doves to their windows?" and of whom he prophesied, "Thou shalt no more be termed forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed desolate: thou shalt be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God!"

A further examination of St. Luke's Gospel will serve to illustrate the two points which I have already remarked, viz. its *human* character, and its *comprehensiveness.*

The story of Christ's disputing with the doctors is given only by him. Here, as in many other places, we may observe many exquisitely *human* touches which St. Luke alone has, and which speak to us in our familiar moments, bringing Christ home to the true Christian, and showing him how our common life may be ennobled by the human sympathy of Christ. "Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." How natural is that! showing, as it does, the Holy Child subject to His parents, who, though sincerely attached to Him, understood but imperfectly His high mission.

The wide sympathy in St. Luke's Gospel is observable in his account of John the Baptist's preaching. St. Matthew represented him as preparing the *Jews* for their Messiah: but St. Luke shows him in conversation with men of every rank and profession, whether Jew or Gentile. In St. Luke alone we read, "And the *people* asked him, What shall we do?" and the publicans (who were sinners) said, "What shall we do?" and the

soldiers (who were Gentiles) likewise demanded of him, saying, "And what shall we do?"

A point of interest regarding Christ as *man* is noted by St. Luke only, when he says of Him at the time of His baptism, "And Jesus began to be about thirty years of age."

By St. Luke the Saviour's genealogy is traced up to Adam. So long ago as the second century, a remark—probably familiar to some of us—was made, namely, that He whom St. Luke is showing as very man was linked to, and about to head up afresh, all the families of men who had sprung from the root of old Adam.

St. Luke alone tells us, that after His baptism, Jesus "came to Nazareth, where He had been *brought up*," and describes His standing up in the synagogue on the sabbath day, and proclaiming publicly His mission to the Gentiles, and fixing upon Himself the eyes of all present, by the utterance of the wondrous and gracious words, "He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor, to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind."

It would detain us too long to go into every particular where St. Luke is more full, and more expressive of human sympathy than the other evangelists; but without dwelling on every detail, we may make this general remark respecting the value of such minute particulars; that it is not only the characteristics of a biographer which we are called upon to note in these distinctive features—that would be a trifle, comparatively—but we are led to admire the condescension and wisdom of the

informing and instructing Spirit, who guided the historian's labour, in adapting Himself to the wants of humanity, and in seeking to draw us to God by the cords of love, and by the bands of a man—of a brother.

Guilty man flies affrighted from the presence of God in Paradise, and hides himself among the trees. God is no longer to him as the pole to the magnet. The current of electricity which was positive, setting Godward, is now negative. Yet God seeks not to repel the sinner. He would fain bring him back unto Himself. How shall He do it? If He should approach him in His awful majesty, or in the unclouded brightness of His unveiled glory and purity, He would but drive man further away, or annihilate him. He must even disguise and veil His glory, by dressing it in the poor rags of our fallen human nature. God has come to His lost, sullen, angry, and affrighted creatures as one of themselves. He presents Himself to us in this Gospel as a way-worn traveller in the dusty highways of life; a partaker to the full of our fallen nature in its weariness, infirmities, sympathies, decay, and death; in all except its sin: bearing about with Him the curse and penalty of that which He never committed; eating the fruit of that which He never planted; reaping a harvest which He never sowed. Thus clothed, thus suffering with and for man, thus humbled from His great glory, He allowed men to be familiar with Him, to draw near to Him, to see that He was very bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. And in those who so conversed with Him—aye, and in all those who, by the eye of faith, so

regard Him—guilty fear is overcome. The love, the mighty love, which brought God so low, to meet man in the paths where he had wandered, and was still wandering out of his way like a lost sheep, this melts down man's pride; this breaks down the middle wall of partition; this makes him see God as his Friend, who would have him regain his forfeited Paradise, and makes guilty man see himself greatly beloved, though guilty; draws him out of himself, and bids him see himself in Christ, and Christ's perfect manhood in the bosom of His Father and His God—himself in Christ, and Christ in God! And so the broken bond is reunited; the tie between heaven and earth is restored; once more there is a ladder set whose base rests on earth, and whose top reaches to heaven, whereon human beings and beings celestial are coming and going, ascending and descending, as on a highway, by which the ransomed can pass over.

There is a point worthy of particular reference in drawing out a comparison between St. Luke's and the other Gospels; that is, the frequency with which St. Luke makes mention of our Lord as engaged in prayer, thus showing us our great Example in the constant attitude of dependence on God—a dependence which marks Him as perfect man. In this Gospel alone do we read that at His baptism He "was praying" (iii. 21). Here alone, that after the healing of the leper, "He withdrew Himself and prayed" (v. 16). St. Luke alone informs us that before the choice of the Twelve, "He continued all night in prayer" (vi. 12). In this Gospel alone are we told

that the confession of Peter was made "as Jesus was alone praying" (ix. 18), and in the same chapter (ver. 29), that at His transfiguration, the fashion of His countenance was altered "as He prayed." Again, St. Luke tells us that the Lord's prayer was dictated by Him at the request of His disciples, who "as He was praying, when He had ceased, said, Lord, teach us to pray" (xi. 1). Again, he only of the four Evangelists gives that touching incident of our Lord's warning to Peter: "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat: but I have prayed for thee" (xxii. 31, 32). Our Lord came on earth to fulfil every law of God, and every law of human nature ordained by God. Now this has always been a universal law—that man shall not obtain good gifts from the Father of Good, except through prayer. Prayer is the appointed medium, by which we draw near to God, commune with Him, and receive all from Him. And His own Son, whose spirit was eternally *one* with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and who, through that unity, must have enjoyed perpetual, uninterrupted communion with His Father, nevertheless so completely embraced our human condition, as to embrace with it our human necessity of prayer as a means of communication with God, and as a *man* to plead with God for those blessings, which as *God* He holds in His own hands and bestows on others.

The last point to which I shall draw your attention is the parables which are peculiar to St. Luke. At the head of these stands the parable of the Prodigal Son,

which has been called a Gospel within a Gospel, and which is, indeed, an epitome of the whole Gospel. It is particularly favourable in spirit to the Gentiles, and to all who are out of the way and erring. Next comes that of the Good Samaritan, which breaks down the barriers of Jewish privilege, and breathes the spirit of the words—"I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." How strongly does it rebuke the prejudices of the Jews, and reveal God as favourable to all who "work righteousness," of whatever clime, country, or race! Of a similar spirit is the parable of Dives and Lazarus, which is only found in St. Luke. He alone gives the story of the unjust judge, inculcating perseverance in prayer. Perhaps of all the incidents recorded of our Lord's life and death, the story of the penitent Thief is that which opens most widely the door of hope to the lost, the outcast, the self-destroyed; and shows the unbounded freedom and unlimited reach of the grace and love of God, who saves to the uttermost. This is recorded by St. Luke alone.

A further study of St. Luke's Gospel, and a careful comparison of it with those of the three other Evangelists, will bring out many other points deserving note, and many tender human touches, such as that—"And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (xxii. 61). St. Luke is the only one who records that look. Who that loves the Lord Jesus would lose the record?

But enough has been said, I trust, to establish the truth of what I have asserted and endeavoured to prove—that the two leading features of St. Luke's Gospel, are

first its human character, corresponding to the title "Son of Man" in the text, and generally applied by him to our Lord; and secondly, its comprehensiveness, corresponding to the mission of the Son of Man, who came "to seek and save them that were lost."

May we think and meditate on these things, dear brethren; and whilst we strive to impress on our minds the leading features of the Gospel bequeathed to the Church of Christ as the work of the beloved physician, Luke of Antioch, may we remember to lift up our hearts to Him, who, in compassion to our infirmities, veiled His Godhead in the likeness of sinful man, and left the glory that He had with the Father before the worlds were made, to "seek out and save them that were lost." May our souls be precious in His sight. May the Holy Spirit dwell in us, and abide with us for ever. May we confess Him who died for us to be Son of Man, and Son of God; and, hereafter, when He shall sit on the right hand of the power of God, awarding to the faithful the mansions which shall be prepared for them that love Him, may He acknowledge us to be of the number of those whom He came to seek and to save, and admit us, together with the Prophets and Evangelists, and those who were the witnesses of His truth on earth, to the joys of that immortal inheritance, of which eye hath not seen the glories, nor ear heard the pealing hallelujahs, nor heart of man been able to conceive the rapturous delights, and peace which passeth all understanding.

[19*th Sept.* 1858]

VI.

THE CHRISTIAN'S RACE.

"*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.*"—HEB. XII. 1, 2.

THE Christian's life is compared in Scripture to various kinds of motion—to a journey, a voyage, a march, a wrestling match, a contest with the cæstus. It is here compared to a race. Before we go further, let us try to ascertain how far the comparison is borne out. And here it may be observed, that it is needless to look in St. Paul's similes for more than a general resemblance. Some writers take great pains in the choice of illustrations, that they may so represent in a variety of ways the object illustrated, as to draw forth new wonder, and convey new instruction at every point and turning: but it was not so with St. Paul. The generality of his allusions convey a distinct idea to the mind, but not a succession of ideas; they lighten up the discourse or argument; there is a natural appropriateness in them, but not that studied, close-fitting resemblance which is aimed at by writers who think more of style than

matter. At the same time rhetoricians and essayists might learn many a noble lesson from the writings of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, and furnish themselves with many a powerful shaft from his well-stored quiver.

I. How does a Christian's life resemble a race? It is of a certain length—sometimes cut short by the hand of disease or accident, but seldom extending beyond threescore years and ten, or fourscore. It is marked out or appointed for us from first to last. It requires a continued effort, and constant sacrifices to secure our arriving at the end. The races in ancient times were run, as most of you know, on a course called a stadium. The length was about one-eighth of a mile. The form resembled an elongated horse-shoe. The race, therefore, was not in a continuous line, but included a going and returning, in all a quarter of a mile. This finds its parallel in human life. The prime of life has often been compared to the turning post, round which the feet of the racers swiftly ran, and from which they sped their way home. All that precedes it is likened to the first part of the course; all that comes after to the running in.

That St. Paul, when writing to Greeks, should use language taken from the games with which they were so familiar, cannot be regarded as singular; but that the same illustrations should be used in an epistle to Hebrews, is somewhat remarkable. It seems to show that not only the Hellenistic language, which was a dialect of Greek, was spoken very widely, but that

Hellenic, that is, Greek ideas had become diffused over large tracts of country where the government was Roman, and the population Hebrew.

Let us next consider the inducement which St. Paul holds out to the Christian, to run with patience the race that is set before him.

II. "Seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses." This refers to the patriarchs and prophets, and holy men and women who, through faith in the coming Messiah, accomplished great deeds under the old covenant.

The word which is rendered in our version, "witnesses," would be better translated "spectators." The expression is taken from the appearance of the Grecian games. The whole of Greece assembled on these festal occasions, eager to see the prizes conferred for excellence in running, leaping, wrestling, boxing, and throwing the discus—also for chariot-races. St. Paul may have witnessed such a gathering from the heights of Corinth. He would see the eager spectators gathered round the contending champions, cheering them in their course, urging them to redoubled efforts, and straining their eyes no less eagerly as they watched the runners, than the runners themselves strained every limb in the contest. He may have watched old men, who in days of yore had won prizes by their swiftness, gazing with pride on their sons or grandsons now rivalling the feats of their youth; and others, who in the earlier part of the day had run and had been crowned, he may have seen looking with intense interest

on the race in which their companions were striving for mastery. Let no one think the simile is so far below the reality, that it is unworthy of being employed. St. Paul knew that whatever of religious feeling was left among the Greeks was expended on occasions such as these. To take part in them they would relinquish the most serious pursuits of a public or private nature; and, in the light-hearted exultation which each free-born Greek felt at a national festival, was the germ of a feeling which, with purer light and knowledge, might ripen into the spirit of joy and thankfulness which animates the Christian who is conscious of the value in the eyes of God of his individual soul, and of the freedom from sin which is the heritage of those who are born anew in Christ of the Holy Ghost.

Well may they be called a *cloud* of witnesses, or spectators. The term cloud signifies the gathering together of watery vapours, less transparent than air, yet not more solid. We may imagine forms of the great believers of olden time looming mysteriously through the atmosphere of ages, desiring to look on the believers of to-day: a mighty company; some more, some less distant. Do they know what our condition is? Who can tell? But if so, they know that we are in possession of privileges for which they longed, and longed in vain; and they wait to see what use we make of them. Perhaps they may see us exhibiting signs of faintness, or turning aside from the course. If so, how they will wonder at us, not without regret and compassion, that they who enjoy such gifts, are so unproductive of good

fruit; that they who have such a prize held out to them, exert themselves so feebly to obtain it! Spectators as they are now, they will be witnesses against us hereafter, if we, to whom the Lord Jesus Christ has been manifestly revealed—who have been made sharers in His victory over death and sin—run our race with less vigour than they theirs. They will tell how they, in striving for the mastery, were temperate in all things. Nay, even the athlete in the Greek stadium will be a witness against us. He, striving for a corruptible prize, a chaplet of parsley, or olive, or ivy, kept his body under—endured heat and cold, weariness and pain, practised temperance, and submitted himself to his trainer, that he might have the freest use of the powers God had given him, and gain renown among his assembled countrymen.

III. Having considered the motive which the Christian has to run the race that is set before him, the Apostle sets forth the manner in which the race is to be run.

1. As to the preparation requisite, "Let us lay aside every weight."

Runners in the Greek national contests stripped themselves of all their clothing that they might be lighter and freer. In like manner the human soul is exhorted to divest, *i. e.* to strip itself of everything which clogs its heavenward aspirations, that it may rise without let or hindrance above the cares of earth, and soar upwards to the Source of all Good. There may be many indulgences which are, in themselves, perfectly

harmless, yet which drag down the spirit to earth, and check the freedom of its flight. Riches are a hindrance to the active exertion of the higher faculties, not because there is anything in wealth which debases its possessor, but because wealth offers the means of procuring earthly comforts with such ease, that the mind is tempted to rest secure in their possession, and to suppose that the acquisition of spiritual blessings will be equally easy. Hence, Jesus said, "how hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." The Venetian conspirator who slipped from the plank which led to his ship, and was borne down by the weight of his armour; the pirate who tries to escape from a sinking vessel with a great bag of gold; the sepoy mutineer who in vain endeavoured to outstrip his pursuers, laden as he was with the plunder of our treasuries—all these illustrate the position of the irresolute Christian who tries to run with his weight, and cannot make up his mind to the sacrifice required in the first instance.

2. He is also called upon to lay aside "the sin that doth so easily beset him." The expression in the original is somewhat difficult. It only occurs in this passage, and according to Chrysostom means, "the sin which easily deceives us." According to some, it refers to the toils or nets set round a wood to inclose the wild animals within. However this may be, we all are familiar with the expression, "besetting sin." Would that our knowledge stopped short of the reality! But, alas! we have all of us, at least, some one sin to which we are especially prone—either a sin of temper, or a sin

of indolence, or pride, or levity, or censoriousness, or some other of the many defects which mar the beauty of the Christian character. This we are called upon to lay aside. How many a Christian's course is impeded by some one sin, which, if not allowed, is at times, and under certain circumstances, his master. In some cases the influence of a besetting sin is not acknowledged. The whole character has become warped from its integrity, in order to screen a gross defect in one particular. These are the least hopeful cases, for in them conscience appears blunted, and no longer exercising its rightful supremacy over the faculties of the mind. But, generally speaking, Christians, if at all in earnest, are aware of their besetting sin. They cannot fail to discern it, if they habitually bring their conduct to the test of God's Word. That standard is infallible, and will surely detect any lurking sin, and point out the slightest deviation from the right path. May God give us grace to apply it faithfully, and diligently to conform ourselves to the rule of holy living which is laid down in the Bible for the true followers of Jesus.

III. The Apostle exhorts us to "run with patience the race that is set before us." There are many qualities required in a successful candidate for the prize in the Christian's race. Of all these endurance is selected. It might be thought that speed was a necessary gift. In the Greek contests it undoubtedly was; and in the Christian's race sluggishness is often a precursor of a total stop. But the main requisite is endurance. The contest is prolonged during the whole period of the

Christian's life, and it is not enough to start at full speed, urged by winged hopes, to make exertions which are too exhausting to be kept up. Perseverance is also needed. The want of this is the cause of many failures and disappointments. Many, who make a fair start, finding the course long, and the protracted effort wearisome, turn aside, and either fall off altogether, or else return by a different path to that which is marked out for them by Him who presides over the race. In old times the trainer of the young athletes and runners exercised an important office. It was his business to attend to their bodily condition, and take care also that they led regular lives. The teachers and instructors of youth, especially those who are the appointed ministers of Christ's Word and sacraments, are placed in a corresponding position towards those who are inspired with a godly desire to run the Christian race. It is their duty to point out the dangers to which youth is especially liable; it belongs to them to aid, by their knowledge, the inexperience of younger believers; it is theirs, too, to comfort and cheer those whose courage fails, or whose strength is exhausted before the wished-for goal is reached. There is one great difference between the ordinary runner and the Christian. Whereas bodily powers, after a certain period of exertion, begin to flag, the Christian receives fresh supplies of spiritual strength, and a continual increase of energy until the end. Not like a meteor, which flashes across the sky, and then disappears amid the gloom of night, he resembles a pure and lucent light, which burns more and more brightly,

shining with an ever-increasing splendour unto the perfect day. May our light so shine, dear brethren, and may our feet be so strengthened to run the race that is set before us, that we may neither be faint nor weary, but "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might."

IV. As an encouragement to our efforts, and as a means of directing our steps, the Apostle exhorts us to "look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

These words connect the text with the preceding chapter, in which are enumerated the worthies of the Old Testament who, "through faith, obtained a good report." The source of their strength, the motive principle of action with them, was faith in the coming Messiah; just as the source of all our strength, the main inducement to run with patience the race that is set before us, is faith in Jesus, as He is revealed to us in the New Testament.

Jesus is called the author and finisher of our faith. In Him our faith must take its earliest rise, and in Him attain to its fullest accomplishment. The religion of Christ is sometimes called "our faith." Of this Jesus is the founder, as He is the perfecter. The first dawn of religious life within the soul is His work. The glory of its final consummation—the crown of martyrdom, or the peaceful end of one who can say, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith," are alike due to Him. Faith in Christ crucified must be at the root of all our hopes of pardon and forgiveness; faith in Christ triumphant over death, and ascended up into heaven,

must be the foundation of our hopes of victory over sin, as well as of everlasting happiness in the world to come.

Hence the Christian is exhorted to "look unto Jesus" in order that he may run with patience the race set before him. As the eyes of the young aspirant for the honours of the stadium were directed towards the awarder of the prize, so the glance of the runner in the heavenly race is to be fixed on Jesus, whom the eye of faith discerns holding in His hand the crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to all that desire to be filled with His presence, and look forward with joy to His appearing.[1]

The Christian's race is different from those of which St. Paul says that in them all run, "but one receiveth the prize."[2]

The number of prizes is co-extensive with the number of the elect, and we know from the Book of Revelation that they shall not be few, but a great multitude, whose voice shall sound "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings" (Rev. xix. 6). Yet, though the crowns of immortality are as numerous as the ranks of the faithful, the soldiers of Christ are not to relax their discipline, nor abandon their efforts. That laborious training, and that system of self-denial, which St. Paul refers to as the rule of life of every man that strove for the mastery in the Olympian and Isthmian games, are to be undergone by the Christian—not for a brief portion of his life, but from first to last. The

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 8. [2] 1 Cor. ix. 24.

words, "So run that ye may obtain," refer as much to the closing period of the Christian's race as to its commencement. St. Paul himself acquaints us with his practice, "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." And he shows us, by the example of the Galatians, the great danger of sacrificing the advantages of a good start by permitting alien influences to hinder them, "that they should not obey the truth." If it can be said of you, dear brethren, "ye *did* run well," O let it not be said that any person or any thing hinders you now. As the trainers rejoiced in the swiftness and endurance of their pupils in the gymnastic games, so must your teachers and ministers rejoice to see you actually running well; fulfilling, and more than fulfilling, whatever hopes they have conceived of you. They must rejoice and be glad, and angels must be sharers in their joy, and the spirits of just men made perfect—the cloud of witnesses of the olden time, and all who have since died in the faith, including your dearest friends and earthly relatives now exalted to the regions of immortal bliss—all these must rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory at the sight of myriads of redeemed souls pressing eagerly towards the mark "for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

In order to do this, we must "look unto Jesus." He must be the object, not of our casual and hasty glances, but of our fixed enduring gaze. We must, as the original bids us, look off from everything else, and look unto

Him alone. Thus only can we "forget the things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before;" by this means, and this alone, can we "turn from dead works to serve the living and true God."

A considerable number of you whom I am addressing are on the point of declaring yourselves, in the presence of many witnesses, to be competitors in the Christian race. Whatever may have been your past career—whether it has been marked by strenuous effort, or by listless apathy; whether you have so run as those who are determined to obtain the prize, or whether you have lagged behind, content to see others outstrip you in the race—you have an opportunity, never allowed to the athlete who contended for a corruptible crown, of reviewing your past career, of accurately surveying the ground which you have traversed, and of gathering from the experience of the past useful lessons and warnings for the future.

An opportunity is afforded you of making a fresh start. Of what inestimable advantage is this to all who are dissatisfied, as the best of us must be, with the progress made during our past career! Life at school holds out many such opportunities—alas! how often wasted and misused. Every new term which you commence, every promotion to a higher class, every new course of studies on which you enter, is such an opportunity. I would hope that none of you are insensible to the advantages of having a fresh start given you, of thinking that past faults are forgiven, and every step hence-

forward in the right direction will meet with sympathy, encouragement, and approval. Only let me exhort you to look somewhat more seriously on these opportunities. You may not fail of eventual success here, or even at the universities, if that should be your destination, or in the various branches of the civil and military service, because you have neglected one or more of these occasions. But remember that every one, if neglected, is a source of weakness; if improved, a source of strength. Those marble tablets that record the early death of some who were your companions here will tell you that you cannot reckon on a long continuance of this state of probation. You cannot tell how many more fresh starts you may have. Oh! then, do not presume upon the mercies of God being indefinitely multiplied to you, but resolve to run this race as if it were to be your last. Do not *presume*. Do not, on the other hand, *despair*. You may have made several false starts heretofore, but there may have been—there must have been—a cause for this; either that you did not exert yourself, or that you did not seek for the help of Him in whose name you must enter upon your course, and to whom you must look from first to last. I say again, do not despair. The poet speaks of men "rising on the ashes of their dead selves to better things:" and if to the unimpeded energy of the human spirit we superadd the love of God, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as motives to new exertion and feeders of hope, who can venture to limit by the scale of past experience the

progress heavenward which you may be permitted to make during the remainder of your career here, or in that upon which you may be entering elsewhere.

Whenever you may be called upon to run your race, be assured that our prayers and our hopes will go with you—that you may be enabled to carry out in action those Christian principles in which you are trained here. There is no way in which you can better serve your country, nor any way in which you can render a better acknowledgment of the religious advantages of which you are partakers here, and of the personal interest taken in your welfare by those who have the charge of your education at this college, than by leading individually a life of faith in the Son of God, and by keeping yourselves unspotted from the world.

[21*st Sunday after Trinity*, 1858. *Shortly before a Confirmation.*]

VII.

ON THE INSTITUTION AND NATURE OF THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

"*And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.*"—MARK XIV. 22—25.

FEW passages in the history of our Lord's life on earth are more important than that which is described in the four verses of my text. They contain an account of the institution of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. I propose to draw your attention to this subject this morning, in the hope that, under the blessing of God, our minds may thereby be better prepared and attuned to the celebration of that holy rite in which you were last Sunday invited to join to-day.

The points to which I would invite your attention, are—

I. The historical account of the Last Supper. It was on the evening of the day before the Crucifixion—that is, on the Thursday evening, which was, with the Jews, the beginning of the feast of unleavened bread. According to their mode of reckoning, an evening and a

morning constituted a day. Consequently, the evening of what we should call the day before the feast, was with them the first day of unleavened bread.

Our Lord, who was constant in His attendance at the Jewish feasts, came up to Jerusalem to commemorate, for the last time, the deliverance of His countrymen—in other words, to keep the feast of the Passover.

As the Paschal lamb was killed at the same hour of the day, on the 14th of Nisan, by all the Jews, it is probable—and the best commentators agree in this—that our Lord celebrated the passover by anticipation, *i. e.* on the evening of the 13th; His own sacrifice on the cross, which was completed at three o'clock on the following day, coinciding with the general celebration of the Passover, which was its type.

The term "eating the Passover" was one of those condensed expressions so common among the Jews. The full expression was, "eating of the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover" (Exod. xii. 27). The feast of unleavened bread lasted seven days, and the Paschal lamb was killed on the first day, in commemoration of the Lord's passing over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians and delivered the houses of His people.

The manner of celebrating the Passover is well known. First, they mingled a cup of wine with water, and one gave thanks, saying, "Blessed be God for the fruit of the vine, and for His holy convocation!" Of these cups of wine they drank four in the course of the ceremony. The other parts of the feast were cakes of

unleavened bread—resembling large flat biscuits—bitter herbs, and the Paschal lamb roasted whole; also the remains of the peace-offerings of the preceding day; and a thick sauce made of dates, figs, raisins, and vinegar. Before the Paschal lamb was eaten, it was usual to instruct the children in the nature of the feast, particularly as to the use of the bitter herbs, and the lamb. Over the second cup of wine the Psalms cxiii. and cxiv. were repeated—being a first part of the hymn called Hallel, composed of the five Psalms, from cxiii. to cxviii. inclusive. They then proceeded to break and to bless a cake of the unleavened bread, reserving a portion of it for the last morsel. The remainder they ate with bitter herbs; then the flesh of the peace-offerings, and lastly that of the lamb, were eaten. After which they washed their hands for the third time during the ceremony. Next, a third cup of wine was filled, called the cup of blessing, because they said grace after meat, and gave thanks for the wine before drinking it. Lastly, a fourth cup of wine was filled, over which the Hallel was completed, a prayer was offered up, and the whole concluded.

Our Lord appears to have instituted the sacrament between the drinking of the second and fourth cup. Thus we read, "as they did eat, Jesus took bread." This was probably before the third cup. After all had eaten, and grace after meat had been said, Jesus "took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank of it." This is more probable than that He consecrated the cup of Hallel, *i. e.* the

fourth cup; because St. Paul uses the technical language which referred to the third cup, "The cup of blessing which we bless."[1]

Afterward, they "sang an hymn," *i. e.* went through the remainder of the Hallel, and having drunk the fourth cup, departed.

Let me now direct your attention—

II. To the words in which our Lord delivered the charge to the Twelve,

(1) "As they did eat, Jesus took the bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave it to them, and said, Take, eat, this is my body." St. Luke adds, "which is given for you, this do in remembrance of me;" and St. Paul[2] has a different version, setting before us more distinctly our Lord's action—"This is my body, which is broken for you." These words were uttered, it would appear, as Jesus was breaking the biscuit, or unleavened bread; and the words will therefore mean, "This bread, which I am breaking, represents my body." There is no doubt that the language was used figuratively, after the Hebrew custom. Parallel instances are to be found in the technical phrases—"this is the Lord's Passover," used of the lamb; "this is the bread of affliction," used of the unleavened bread, eaten with bitter herbs; in both which cases nothing more was meant than, "This lamb is eaten in obedience to the command of God, who passed over our houses;" and "This unleavened cake is eaten in memorial of the bread which our fathers ate in the day of affliction, when they fled in haste from the land of Egypt."

[1] 1 Cor. x. 16. [2] 1 Cor. xi. 24.

The words of our Lord, "Take, eat, this is my body," addressed to His disciples, conveyed to them an announcement, that the rite which they had just been partakers of had more than a commemorative or retrospective meaning; that it was also prophetical of an act which was on the eve of accomplishment—the offering up on the cross of the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world." The time would shortly come, when the lesser would be merged and absorbed in the greater; when the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb would cease, and when the breaking of bread would have a retrospective character; hence, as we find it written, both in St. Luke's Gospel, and St. Paul's Epistle above referred to, Jesus added, "This do in remembrance of me."

In St. Mark's account it is only stated that our Lord gave thanks over the cup; but both St. Luke and St. Paul speak of His giving thanks before the breaking of bread. From this circumstance, the sacrament received the name of Eucharist, which means, "giving thanks." That there was something unusually solemn and remarkable in our Lord's manner as He gave the blessing and brake the bread, we may infer from what is recorded of the two disciples at Emmaus, who recognised the risen Saviour, by the manner of His breaking bread.[1]

(2) Next, "He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank of it."

The giving of thanks, or blessing the cup, was, as we have seen, a part of the ancient rite. Instead of "They

[1] Luke xxiv. 30—35.

all drank of it," we read in St. Matthew, "Drink ye all of it"—an unimportant variation.

The following verse in St. Mark's version gives an explanation of the meaning of the cup analogous to that just before given of the meaning of the bread broken:—"This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many:" in other words, "This wine, which you have hitherto drunk in remembrance of the Old Covenant made between God and His people Israel, and which signified the blood sprinkled on the door-posts, in virtue of which your forefathers were spared when the avenging angel smote the Egyptians, now signifies the blood with which you must be sprinkled inwardly for the remission of your sins; even my blood, which is on the eve of being shed for you and for many—that is, for all mankind." It is unfortunate that the word "testament" should have been chosen in our version instead of "covenant," both because the latter word more clearly expresses the relation in which we stand to God through the redemption of Christ, and because the term New Testament is appropriated by common use to the Gospels and Epistles, the Acts of the Apostles, and the Book of Revelations. You will mark a contrast between the blood of the Old, and that of the New Covenant. Under the Old Covenant, a lamb was slain for each house. Under the New, the blood of Christ sufficed for all the families of the earth. The mention of a *new* covenant implies the abrogation or annulling of all existing covenants. So it was with the covenant to which Jesus now admitted for the first

time the Twelve whom He had chosen out of the world. For them there was no more commemoration of the deliverance of their forefathers. A better deliverance was accomplishing for them: even a deliverance from the power of sin, and from a bondage worse than Egyptian.

In St. Matthew's Gospel the cause for which the blood of Christ was shed is given—namely, "for the remission of sins." With this reason given us, we can well understand why Jesus should say, "Drink ye all of it;" and why it should be recorded, "They all drank of it." For who was there, and who is there, for whom remission of sins was not, and is not, necessary? All will therefore desire to fulfil Christ's command, who value their soul's salvation. All, moreover, who love the Lord Jesus—who feel gratitude in their hearts to Him, will desire to partake in both elements; for, as St. Paul says, "As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we do show forth the Lord's death till He come." Hence the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is not merely retrospective and commemorative of the great deliverance wrought for mankind, but it is prospective; it enables us to show our faith in the revelations which our Lord has made respecting His second coming. St. Mark continues: "Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until the day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

You are by this time familiar with the expression "fruit of the vine," as applied to the wine which formed part of the Paschal Feast. In the present case, the

word which is rendered "fruit," would be better rendered "product," or "production."

Our Lord only mentions the wine, and not the bread, probably because the former was formally blessed at a particular stage in the feast. But, though He only speaks of one of the elements, the meaning of the verse is: "I will not again eat the Passover with you on earth, nor will I partake of the cup of blessing with you, until the heavens have received Me, and I have prepared a place for you; and ye, who have been faithful to Me on earth, shall be welcomed by Me to the joys of heaven." These joys would be new to the disciples: hence Jesus speaks of "drinking the new fruit of the vine." It is not unusual in Scripture to represent happiness by a feast; and wine is universally taken as a symbol of joy and gladness. Hence the expression is easily accounted for, and the real meaning which lies under the figure is ascertained.

III. The next point to which I would invite your attention is the manner of celebrating the Lord's Supper observed in the primitive Christian Church.

The first Christians celebrated the Holy Sacrament at or after their usual supper. This we learn from the earliest accounts in the Acts of the Apostles. During times of persecution and trouble, when it was not safe for them to assemble in large numbers at the evening meal, the Christian believers used to meet before break of day. The first use of the word sacrament, in the sense which the Church has attached to it, is in the letter of Pliny to the Emperor Trajan, in which he tells his

imperial master that the Christians were in the habit of meeting before daybreak, and of binding themselves by an oath, which in the Roman civil and military sense was called "Sacramentum," not to any crime, but that they would not commit theft, robbery, nor adultery, nor betray confidence, nor refuse to restore a deposit on demand.[1] From this letter, so honourable to the early Christians, it is clear that Pliny did not fully understand the purpose of their meeting. A Christian historian would have preserved the leading feature of those meetings—the breaking of bread and drinking of wine in remembrance of the Lord Jesus.

In the early Fathers we read that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was received fasting in the morning, having soon been separated from the Agapæ, or feasts of charity, which were the occasion of great abuses, as in the case of the Corinthian Church. For above a thousand years the bread used in the Sacrament was broken; afterwards wafers were introduced in the Church of Rome, but this usage is peculiar to them. The only other important modification or change which has been introduced by a large branch of the Church is the withholding of the cup from the laity. This was introduced in the twelfth century, and authorized by the Council of Constance. It was acknowledged at the time to be an innovation. It had been denounced as an act of sacrilege by a pope in the fifth century, and the only ostensible ground for its introduction was, that wine was occasionally spilt; the real, though hidden, object being

[1] Plin. Epist. xcvi. ed. Keil.

to secure for the clergy an exclusive privilege, and mark the distinction between them and the laity. In a convocation in the first year of Edward VI.'s reign, it was unanimously voted that the Sacrament should be received in both kinds by the laity as well as by the clergy; and the Thirtieth Article expressly says, "The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay people; for both the parts of the Lord's Sacrament, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be ministered to all Christian men alike."

IV. Let me now say a few words of the way in which we observe the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

We agree with the early Church, if not with the primitive Apostolic Church, in receiving the Sacrament in the morning, and fasting, that is, not as a sequel to a meal. We receive it kneeling, in sign of reverence to the Founder of the Sacrament, although the twelve received it from His hands reclining or sitting. Though we do not use unleavened bread or biscuit, we use bread which admits of being broken into small pieces—an emblem of the different members of the Christian community, who, in celebrating the Lord's Supper, unite in one. "For," says St. Paul, "we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." We do not mix the wine with water, for the simple reason that it is not customary in this country. In the East, in our Lord's time, it was the invariable custom.

So far as outward form goes, then, it appears that we have preserved all that is essential in the primitive institution.

The words used in consecrating the elements, and in administering them, carry back our minds to the Last Supper of our Lord, and also point out to us the spirit in which we should receive the Sacrament. On that spirit I shall presently speak.

We define a Sacrament in Art. XXV. not only as "a badge or token of Christian men's profession, but as a certain sure witness and effectual sign of grace, and God's good will to us;" and in the same Article we limit the number to two. St. Augustine's definition of a Sacrament, as "an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace," is adopted in our Church Catechism, with the addition of the words, "given to us, ordained by Christ Himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof."

The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is not regarded by us as a sacrifice, for this reason, that the death of Christ was a "perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world" (Art. XXXI.). Hence, the same Article condemns "the sacrifices of Masses, in which it was commonly said that the priest did offer up Christ for the quick and dead," as "blasphemous fables, and dangerous deceits."

In the frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper we agree with all denominations of Christians, except the Society of Friends, who maintain that the institution was for the Apostles, not for those who come after. Against them we take up this ground, that the reason given for the administration of the Sacrament to the Twelve being the remission of sins, and there being the

same reason for our receiving it—seeing that we all have sinned, and there is no other way of remission of sins than through Christ alone—we stand in the same relation to our Lord that the Twelve did, and therefore we need the same administration of the Sacrament to us. Also, as I have before said, we desire "to show forth the Lord's death till He come."

The Twenty-eighth Article guards us against one main error of the Church of Rome, namely, Transubstantiation (or change in the substance of bread and wine), which, it is said, "cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a Sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions." This error and that of "Consubstantiation," or presence of Christ's material body in the bread, in which Luther believed, may be classed together. To prove all the statements made in our Article would be an easy, but a somewhat lengthy task. I pass it by to-day, merely remarking that the Church of England, in holding the doctrine of the "real presence," as it is called, does not believe in the material presence of Christ's body. The whole dispute about the real presence might have been avoided if a due distinction had been observed between the terms *real* and *material*. We hold that Christ is really present in Spirit, not in body; for a body, by its property and nature, can only be in one place at once. When the Romanists appeal to the words of Scripture, "This is my body," they omit to add the words of the latest revelation, "which is broken for you." Now, this addition

shows that we cannot take our Lord's words literally, for at that time His body was not broken on the cross. Only the bread was broken. So of the cup. After calling it "His blood," Jesus speaks of it "as the fruit of the vine," showing that it had not changed its material nature, though the purpose to which it was now consecrated had given it a heavenly and spiritual significance.

The doctrine of Transubstantiation gave rise to the superstitions of carrying about the host—or victim—and of lifting it up, which is a misapplication of the text, "I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men to me."

We interpret our Lord's words and the primitive rites used in the Christian Church spiritually. We offer a spiritual sacrifice, namely, that of "ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto God." We "lift up our hearts to the Lord." We "give thanks unto the Lord."

The Lord's Supper is to us a Sacrament by which we bind ourselves anew to the service of Christ. It is a communion of His body and blood, of which we all by faith are partakers. He is really present, and we really eat His flesh and drink His blood—not carnally, not with our bodily members, but only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the means whereby we do so is Faith. What else but Faith can reach from earth to heaven? How otherwise can spiritual things become to us living realities? Lastly, it is to us an Eucharist, or feast of thanksgiving—of thanksgiving for unlooked-for and undeserved mercies, for the gift of life to those who

were under sentence of death, and for the spiritual refreshment of our souls, whereby we are made partakers of great and unspeakable benefits, the assurance of God's mercy, and of our interest in Christ, and the realization of the Saviour's prayer—"that they all may be one, even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee: that they all may be one in us."

May these words be realized by each of us who meet at the holy table of the Lord this day, dear brethren; which may God of His infinite mercy grant, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

"Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to the Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ; to God the only wise be glory, through Christ Jesus, for ever." Amen.

[*Nov.* 7, 1858.]

VIII.

ON CHRISTIAN EARNESTNESS.

"*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.*"—ECCLES. IX. 10.

IF the Book of God's Word were recommended to us merely by those qualities by which we judge any other book, we could scarcely fail to acknowledge the deep human wisdom and practical value of many of its parts, especially of the writings of the wise king Solomon. The Book of Ecclesiastes, whether written by Solomon himself, or by some one who faithfully represented his thoughts, is remarkable for the sad and sober tone of matured wisdom and experience which belongs to the decline of life, and which speaks with unusual weight when it proceeds from a man of more than human wisdom, who nevertheless fell into human weaknesses, and drew sin, as it were, "with a cart-rope." The text contains an exhortation to earnestness, or concentration of purpose, accompanied by a reason—that reason being, that life is our only opportunity for doing anything, and that the grave is, so far as human efforts and strivings after perfection are concerned, the "be all and the end all."

Other motives to earnestness might be named, some of a higher kind—such as the consideration of our duty to God, whose glory we are bound to promote by every effort, and the desire to approve ourselves in *His* sight, from whom we receive all gifts of intellect, and imagination, and inventive and administrative power. Others might be drawn from a more searching inquiry into the laws of the human mind and the moral constitution of man, such as that of the philosopher who defined happiness as "an energy of the soul according to the most excellent virtue," a definition which would require the active exercise of all the higher faculties in order to the realization of the thing defined. The preacher's motive is not of an exalted, nor yet of a philosophic kind. It is eminently practical. Standing on the verge of the grave, and looking back upon the events of his past life, the preacher seems to concentrate in one sentence all that his experience of life has taught him—"Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Out of the wreck of hopes, and the ruin of stately projects, this at least remained—the consciousness of great attainments, and great political successes, achieved by unparalleled industry and the strenuous exertion of a powerful and divinely gifted mind. For a period of his life he had pursued a noble dream of self-culture, and had bestowed unremitting attention on the duties of government. But with success his heart was lifted up, and that rigid self-restraint which he had practised in his youth was relaxed, and he whose throne was established in wisdom and righteousness yielded to the

allurements of pleasure: and then the bow that shot so keenly, aiming at truth and never swerving from the mark, grew slack; and public business was discharged in a merely perfunctory way; and the contemplation of the glories of God's creation gave way to a self-satisfied survey of the newly cemented kingdoms of Israel and Judah, soon to be dismembered; and knowledge was picked up at second-hand, and wisdom gave way to subtlety of conceit; and the great Solomon, whose fame had reached to the utternost parts of the earth, became little better than the kings of Assyria and Egypt, who worshipped idols. The knowledge of his fall gives greater effect to his warning, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

The text naturally divides itself into three heads:—(1) What we are to do. (2) How we are to do it. (3) Why we are to it. In this order we will consider them.

I. What we are to do. The preacher says, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it." As if he would say, "Be not too nice, nor too fastidious in thy choice of employment—take whatever the Lord shall send thee; anything is better than idleness; seek to put forth thy powers, and look for satisfaction in the act of exertion; be not slothful, but diligent." Yet this needs qualifying. Even human nature, unrenewed by grace, would raise a protest against our engaging in some employments. And when that inward monitor which God has implanted within us, that moral habit of the mind which approves or

disapproves of all that we do, is illumined from above, and registers its verdicts according to the law of God, then we instinctively recognise some courses of action as allowable, others as good, others again as questionable, others as decidedly harmful. It is not everything, therefore, which we are at liberty to take in hand, but only such things as are in themselves good or allowable —such as our conscience, enlightened by the Spirit of God, pronounces to be fit and proper objects of our choice. When this is the case—when, after humbly seeking the guidance of the Almighty by prayer, we engage in any undertaking—we need not be deterred by considerations such as these, that the work is not to our taste, or that it does not admit of the exertion of all our energies: we should labour in a subordinate position as willingly as if we had full scope for our powers, and cheerfully engage in distasteful work, so long as it be honest work. We may be sure that the effort to do our duty conscientiously will bring with it its own reward, and serve to sweeten that which was at first unpalatable, and lighten the weight of that which was burthensome.

No one will be excused for remaining idle through life, for there are some things which our hand "findeth to do" in every stage of life. In boyhood work is found for us to do. The daily routine of school life, with its regular succession of employments, leaves you scarcely an hour without its appropriate work or occasion of relaxation. The same apportionment of time prevails, though to a less degree, at the universities, and in the various professions for which you are destined. The

recurring seasons of the year, and the sub-divisions of time into months, and weeks, and days, and hours, suggest changes of employment, and a variety of occupation for persons of every age. There is no fear, therefore, of our lacking employment, if we are on the look-out for it; there is more fear for the naturally energetic that they should attempt too much, and thereby weaken and distract their energies. Unity of purpose and design is a great secret of success. Another, scarcely of less importance, is patience. No life is so remarkable for the energy displayed, and the works accomplished during its continuance, as that of our Lord. Yet He remained for thirty years before He entered on His public ministry. He never did anything before the time had come. Again and again He rebuked the impatience of those who would have Him manifest His power before the proper season had arrived. Surely, in these respects the life of Jesus is meant to convey a lesson to us. Surely, if we are to imitate Him in His activity, when once entered upon His ministry, we are bound no less to imitate Him in His repose—in that calm attitude which belongs to conscious strength—and to avoid that restless bustling activity, which seeks to do work which our hand does not find, which labours at the wrong time, and therefore without effect. There is no true greatness in man where this patience is wanting. A Cromwell, brooding over his country's wrongs in the retirement of rural life; a Napoleon, waiting till France besought him to abolish the reign of Terror; a Havelock, occupied with philosophical and literary pursuits,

and the ordinary details of a soldier's life, till he was called upon to lead a division; these men knew how to bide their time, and the world acknowledges how well, though with different aims and moral purposes, they did "what their hand found to do."

II. How we are to do it. The text says, "Do it with thy might." Whatever may be our powers, be they great or be they small, they are to be exerted to the full. No reserve, no lukewarmness, no indifference, can be allowed to have place in our system, or cripple the work of our hand. It is a trite saying, that if a thing be worth doing it is worth doing well; in other words, we should not take any work in hand unless we are prepared to carry it out with all the faculties of our mind and body. And here it cannot be too strongly insisted on that all labour is useless wherein the hand alone works. A man cannot even break stones on the road properly without giving his mind to it. Every work needs attention. It may call for the exercise of very few faculties of the mind, but these cannot be dispensed with. Even those athletic games which call into exercise the bodily powers, and which demand certain gifts of strength and activity as necessary conditions of excellence, require also the exercise of important qualities of the mind—observation, judgment, recollection of past experience, and of the laws of the game, which must be borne in mind whether consciously or unconsciously; and most important moral qualities—courage, temper, self-reliance, decision, and patience. Without these, as you well know, no quickness of sight,

no elasticity of muscle, nor sympathy of the eye and hand, are sufficient to secure a high degree of excellence in those manly games in which you seek recreation from your studies, and gain that physical strength and development of the bodily powers, which are in some cases a necessary, in all an useful, basis of an energetic and active life, whatever profession you may enter upon.

I pass on to your studies. These are not voluntary, but are selected for you. Certain hours also are assigned to the prosecution of the different branches of study in which you are engaged. In these respects, then, the choice is made for you. Both the work to be done, and the time when it is to be done, are prescribed. This is necessary in every system, and needs no explanation. When therefore you come to your daily work, in what spirit should you set about it? Not in the spirit of sullen or apathetic indifference, not as if you were made the victims of unreasonable tyranny, but in the spirit of cheerful, resolute, hearty industry. You may like one branch of study better than another; this will account for your making greater progress therein, but it will not justify nor excuse your inattention to that which is less congenial. There is no study in which you are employed here which is not worth—intrinsically worth—the application of your powers without any reserve or holding back. The rules of Grammar are the laws of language, and you cannot neglect them without detriment to the purity and correctness of your native tongue. The literature and history of Greece and Rome have been employed as the vehicles of education for so

many centuries that they have become indispensable. The language of ordinary society, the periodical literature of the day, the requirements of almost every department of the public service presuppose, or encourage in the strongest way, attention to those studies which form the basis of classical education. And if ancient literature, and languages now dead, are indispensable because society requires a knowledge of them, surely the history and literature of modern Europe, and the living languages in which that literature is preserved, are deserving of your attention. In whatever field of literature your energies are put forth, ancient or modern, European or Oriental, you have the strongest inducements to lay in this place a solid foundation for future excellence. I have spoken only of one vehicle of education. There are many others with which you are familiar. The science of numbers; the principles of abstract reasoning conveyed by geometrical problems or by other mathematical processes; the laws which govern the motions of the heavenly bodies; the investigation of the causes which produce atmospheric phenomena, and of those which influence the surface of the earth and sea; the analysis of bodies into their constituent elementary parts, and the application of chemical discoveries to human wants; the principles of engineering, of surveying, and of constructing defences against an enemy; the power of representing correctly the forms of outward objects, and of conveying, by means of outline, light and shade, and colour, the emotions of the mind, and the passions which exhibit themselves in action; the study

of the language of sound, and the adaptation of the human voice to hymn the praises of the Divine Creator, and to express all that the human heart feels in its sadness and in its joy, in its moments of devotion and its bursts of patriotic ardour; and, last of all, the science of sciences—Theology—the study of the Nature and attributes of God, as revealed to us in His Word, as illustrated by the works of His hand, as witnessed by the thoughts of man, and evidenced in the history of His Church: all these studies are, each in their degree, intrinsically worth your attention, and deserving of the concentrated energies of your mind.

"Who is sufficient for these things?" you may ask. None of you for all, yet all of you for some, I would answer. To know *something of everything, and everything of something*, has been defined as the maximum of what human powers should aim at. But whatever may be the boundaries of human powers, earnestness of purpose is the key to all excellence.

How many of you are persuaded of this? How many of you habitually employ your school hours in the acquisition of such knowledge as you are invited to make your own? I fear that there are many whose consciences must tell them of half-hours and hours wasted, of attention withheld from school work and given to the merest trifles, of listlessness and unpunctuality, and the systematic shirking of whatever comes before them in the light of a duty. Is this to fulfil the injunction, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might"?

I will take one more case, and it shall be the last. When you kneel down in prayer before your Heavenly Father, are your thoughts fully bent and fixed on the object of your adoration? This is surely one of the things which you should find to do, both morning and evening. And when you come into the house of God, when prayers are offered up for you in the congregation —prayers which have been breathed by the servants of God for many generations, and which arise like a sweet incense-cloud from earth to heaven from every country that the sun shines on—is your heart in your work? Do you join in heart and soul with your brethren and companions who go up into the house of the Lord? This is what you find to do once a week; in what spirit do you do it? Perhaps the retrospect may not be encouraging. Nevertheless, there is still time for you to acquire the power which you need. Strive to secure the aid of that Spirit who helpeth our infirmities; and then you will no longer be cold and feeble in your devotions, but strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.

III. Let us, in conclusion, briefly consider the reason, Why we are to do it? "For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

The young are proverbially careless of death; and therefore I cannot expect that you will give due weight to this reason. I rather believe that you look forward to a period of life sufficient to enable you to do all that you want to do, and expect to die, after due warning and preparation, full of years if not of wisdom, and ready to

exclaim with aged Simeon, "Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word." I would therefore insist rather on the irrevocable nature of time, of opportunities of learning, and of doing the will of God in general, and remind you especially of those advantages which a place of education like this offers you once for all, not to be repeated. Every year, every term, closes on a series of opportunities of working which have either been profitably employed or neglected. Similar opportunities, but not the same, may recur here: in the world they are never repeated. Succeeding periods are the graves of the past. You use your time, or you waste it; you come out of a trial stronger or feebler; habits of industry or indolence are strengthened, according as you do the work your hand finds to do, or neglect it.

One caution especially belongs to the age of boyhood. Condemn not your own strength. Think not that, because others may outstrip you in the race, your exertions are contemptible. Think not that success is the only test of well-used time and well-directed energies. Better is it that you should have faithfully employed a single talent than that you should have been an unfaithful steward of greater gifts. Although you may be left behind in the race by those who have been less earnest than yourself, depend upon it, the eye of God and of all rightly judging men rests with greater pleasure on your honest, humble attempt to employ to the utmost the natural gifts which you possess, than on the lukewarmness and lack of earnestness of your more highly gifted

companions. Above all, in the great work which each of you have to attend to during the whole of your lives, the saving of your souls, be diligent, and earnest. To realize your own sinfulness and need of a Saviour, the surpassing love of an all-just God shown in the scheme of man's redemption through Christ, and in the gift of His Holy Spirit to dwell within the hearts of men; to keep constantly before your minds the prospect of heaven and the alternative of hell; to make your life here below a preparation for the life that shall be hereafter; and as a part of that preparation to bring not only your outward deeds and uttered words, but the unexpressed thoughts of the heart into captivity to the law of Christ—all this requires the most intense application, far more than any work, or knowledge, or wisdom, or device of which the grave is the boundary: and to this work, reaching as it does beyond the grave in its effects and its consequences to the human soul, the maxim of the preacher most emphatically applies—Do it with thy might.

IX.

UNWILLINGNESS TO COME TO CHRIST.

"And ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life."
JOHN v. 40.

THERE is a tone of deep disappointment in these words of our Lord. That there should be so, we cannot wonder, when we consider what His mission was, and how it was received—that He came to give life to His people, and they would not come to receive it. A brief reference to the context will bring before your minds the occasion when, and the persons to whom, the words of the text were uttered. They were addressed to the unbelieving Jews, who sought to persecute Jesus for healing a man on the Sabbath-day.

Why should they cavil? Not on account of jealousy, for Jesus was ready to do greater things for them—to give them not the use of limbs, but life. Not from any real regard for the Sabbath, which they pretended was violated, for the law of Moses, on which they rested, permitted works of piety, necessity, and charity, to be done on the Sabbath; and, as devout Israelites, they were bound to rejoice in such works being done. It was rather from mistaken zeal, because Jesus defended His conduct by reference to the works of God—to the

continual exercise of power by which the whole creation is sustained and kept in order—saying, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work."

Mark the contrast between the aim of Jesus and that of the Jews. He sought to give them life; and as an indication of His power, He had just restored the power of walking to one who had been lame thirty and eight years. They sought to kill Him, because He asserted Himself to be in *word*, what He had manifestly shown Himself to be in *deed*, the Son of God. Therefore Jesus, after warning them that the Son had a commission from the Father, not only to bestow life, but to execute judgment, traced their perverseness to its true source, *unbelief*—that which had been the bane of the Jewish nation in former time, and which was to lead to the rejection of the whole nation, excepting a remnant, who should believe and be saved.

Yes, the words which were addressed to the unbelieving Jews *then* may be addressed with equal fitness to the bulk of the nation *now*. The majority are cast out because of unbelief; the believers constituting but a very small portion of the still numerous people.

So, then, the Jews of the present day resemble in one main particular the Jews of the time of Tiberius. About their future destiny we have express declarations of Scripture that they shall be restored when the fulness of the Gentiles shall have come in. This event is, therefore, that which claims our more immediate attention, not only because it includes ourselves, but because Revelation has pointed it out as an earlier link in the

great chain of events which shall precede the second coming of the Son of Man.

Now, if we turn to the condition of the Gentile world we still find a large number of our fellow-creatures coming under the description of those who will not come to Christ. We naturally ask, How is this? Is there not sufficient inducement held out? Is the motive a paltry one, such as cannot be expected to influence reasonable human beings? Far from it. The Bible tells us that the inducement is life everlasting, promised to all those who hear the Word of Jesus, and believe on Him that sent Him. Of such we have our Lord's own declaration, that they have passed from death to life. And this life, of which they who believe become partakers, is derived from the Father, and communicated through the Son. For, "as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself."

Before I proceed farther, let me recall to your remembrance some of the statements contained in Scripture as to the nature of the life spoken of.

It is something more than natural life, although of that also Christ is the giver. "Take no thought for your life," said Jesus; and again, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." And the Apostle James asks, "What is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away." Such a life is of no account in respect of eternity, even though it be raised above that of the brutes by a knowledge of Christ.

For, as St. Paul says, "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." Yes, *spiritual* life implies, of a necessity, *immortal* life, for Christ, who came down from heaven to give life unto the world, brought not only *life* but *immortality* to light by the Gospel. And this glorious attribute of our spiritual life is owing to Christ's resurrection and ascension, whereby all who are in Him shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ. All hope of immortality is bound up in Him. For that eternal life which God hath given us is in His Son. On the one hand we have the promise, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life;" on the other the solemn warning, "He that believeth not the Son hath not life." So, then, we have a promise of life so long as we abide in Jesus, and walk in the Spirit, for "to be spiritually minded is life and peace." But the life which throbs in the pulses of the believer's heart is weak and faint now, like the light of the moon which shines only by reflection. It is a derived life, supplied by spiritual contact with Christ, in whom the fountain resides. Hereafter we shall enjoy a more immediate contact with Him, and a fuller portion of life; for whereas now "our life is hid with Christ in God; afterwards, when He who is our life shall appear, then shall we also appear with Him in glory."

Having shown from Scripture what is meant by the word "life," let us endeavour to bring before our minds in some degree the feelings which prompted our Lord to give utterance to the words of the text, "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life." Judging from a

human point of view, any one would say, as we began by saying, that the words express a feeling of deep disappointment.

We judge of men's eagerness to secure an object, by the sacrifices they make to obtain it, by the time at which they form their plans beforehand, by the earnestness they employ in dealing with others, and by the abstract desirableness of the object. Now, although we know not enough of the nature of the case to say that it is, in the abstract, desirable for men to be saved, yet for the Son of God, as the giver of life, it would seem to be desirable that His creatures should possess life. There is no more godlike act than that of giving life, and that of rescuing a soul from death. To rescue a comrade from imminent death in the battle-field is justly deemed a noble exploit, worthy of being adorned by the cross of honour, which bears the sovereign's name. The risk is great; success is uncertain. Scarce any one would make the venture if he thought it would not be welcomed by his perishing comrade. We do not hear of unwillingness on the part of the wounded to be saved, though we do read in history of noble instances of men forgetting their own sufferings, absorbed in their concern for the welfare of their comrades and countrymen. But there is a wide difference between the act of a few individuals nobly choosing to sacrifice their lives for the supposed benefit of their countrymen, and the act of a whole nation—or by far the greater part—rejecting an offer of safety, made to them in the most urgent way, and involving no danger to others.

Next consider the *earnestness* with which Christ pleaded with men—earnestness of word, and corresponding deed. How He wept over Jerusalem, saying, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that concern thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." What toil and labour, what agony of spirit, were crowded into the ministry of a few short years by Him who came on earth to do His Father's will! Bear in mind, too, how the Apostles followed in the footsteps of their Master, expressing not only a sincere wish, but a passionate desire that sinners should be converted and live. St. Paul was ready even to be accursed for Israel's sake, and to become all things to all men, if so be that he might gain some. The words and deeds, therefore, of Jesus and His Apostles prove both Him and them to have been very eager to rescue souls from death.

As regards the *sacrifice* which Christ made, we can form no estimate at all answering to the reality. For we can have no conception—familiar as we are with sin—of the aversion of a perfect Being to all that bears the stamp of sin, and therefore we cannot realize to ourselves the daily cross endured by Christ, when conversing with sinners, and seeing them selfish and greedy, indifferent and careless, full of pride, jealousy, and hypocrisy, of self-righteousness, and unbelief. But we can form some notion of the moral heroism required to induce a man to lay down his life for an ungrateful people, especially when this is not the result of a sudden resolution, nor the consequence of unforeseen events—the

sequel of that which the heathens called necessity, and which modern despots call the inexorable logic of facts —not, lastly, a result into which he has slid unwillingly and reluctantly, but a long-planned, fore-determined, and deliberate act, taken in hand with a definite purpose, and with a clear conception of all the circumstances that would aggravate its horrors; this it is which makes us exclaim, when we contemplate the acts of Christ's sacrifice, "Never man desired any object so ardently as He desired that for which His precious blood was shed— the life of the world, especially of His countrymen, the chosen people of God."

And now to quit the past, and turn to the present. It is scarcely necessary to speak of the *fact*, that men will not come to Christ. Every well-instructed Christian knows how indisposed the majority are to come to Him in the true sense of the word; how loth to embrace the Gospel, not only with its privileges, but with its trials; how ready to undertake any duties rather than those which concern them as servants of God. The act of coming to Christ involves self-denial; foregoing many gratifications that we naturally desire; enduring without a murmur many disappointments which embitter our existence, and would render us positively unhappy, were there no future to anticipate.

Then, the reward is *to come;* the self-denial is *present.* We do not sufficiently regard our earthly life as a fleeting vapour, which has no security or permanence; but we form our plans as though we could depend upon a continuance of life, and health, and

worldly goods; yet, without Christ, there is no life in the true sense of the word. For there is no union of the soul with God; none of that enjoyment which is the highest privilege of the spiritual Being, and which raises him above the brute.

Can the world give life? No, not for a moment. Can any one else but the Son of God give it? No one. Whence, then, this unwillingness to embrace the offer of Christ? It is a sad and wondrous spectacle, to see *such* a gift so little valued! On the other hand, what efforts men make to prolong their earthly life! How they cling to life, as the lamp burns lower, and more dimly! It is a strange delusion! Verily, we "walk in a vain shadow, and disquiet ourselves in vain."

Do we inquire the causes why men will not come to Christ? These are various. Unbelief lies at the root of all; for if we believed all that the Bible tells us, we should come, that we might have life.

Some think they *cannot* come; that their sins have put such a barrier between them and God, that they cannot draw near to Him, even in the person of Christ. This deters them from the attempt, in spite of such promises as these:—"Whoso cometh unto Me, I will in nowise cast out;" and, "So God loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Oh! who can give way to despondency in the face of such promises? Surely, none who have formed a right estimate of the mercy and loving-kindness, as well as the truthfulness of God.

Others are perverse and unwilling to come to Christ, not from any deep-rooted love of sin, but from slowness of heart. And after a certain period of backwardness and delay, *will not* becomes *cannot.* This is a fearful condition, from which may God in His infinite mercy preserve each one of us!

Some really prefer the service of sin; that is, in other words, the way that leads to death. After a long course of sin, the moral nature of man becomes brutalized, and the pure joys of heaven hold out no attraction to the degraded soul.

Some think that they can choose the right path at any given time; that, as the will is free, so it merely requires an effort of the will to make the choice. And there is some show of truth in this, because no one can presume to limit the period up to which God's mercy extends. He has pardoned, and, doubtless, can pardon sinners at the eleventh hour, but it is an experiment too full of danger to be made by any reasonable man, woman, or child. Motives of self-preservation concur with motives of gratitude and love to urge the immediate acceptance of the offer of eternal life which God holds out to the believer in Christ. Many have waited till it became too late to close with that offer. No one ever accepted it too soon. No after circumstances can arise to make the young believer regret that he has taken the Lord of Life at His word, and believed in the assurance—"Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

Some there are who know not the way of salvation.

This is not your case. You know to whom you must come. You know, too, the irrevocable nature of this mortal life. It is given to you for certain purposes. It is not given more than once. Should death surprise you—as it may well surprise any one of you before you reach the age of manhood—consider what a prospect lies before you. No one, says the Apostle, "dieth for himself." Either you must die to Christ, to be His for ever, or die to Satan, to dwell in darkness and everlasting despair, cut off from the presence of the living God, enduring throughout the countless ages of eternity that which the Evangelist calls "the second death." How strong an inducement, then, to live to Christ; that whether living or dying you may be His—His in time and in eternity; His in the chequered sunlight and shadows of earth; His in the bright effulgence of unclouded glory in heaven!

Indeed, you have many inducements to come to Christ. It is easier for you than for those who are exposed to the temptations of maturer life, and beset by the cares and business of the world. Moreover, He seems to delight in an especial manner in the service of the young—in the complete surrender of the youthful affections to *Him, personally,* and the entire devotion of the youthful faculties to His service. You are deficient in some qualities which time confers, or at any rate strengthens; a calm judgment, self-control, and the power of raising yourselves above the details of any given case, and the feelings which centre in self. But you have a fund of generous impulses,

which were implanted in you by your heavenly Father, and upon which you may draw without stint or limit. You are less likely to be daunted by difficulties, and repelled by disappointments, than you will be in maturer life, and after the experience, perhaps, of repeated failures. Death has not claimed you for his own; and you have a stronger instinct that life is your portion.

Oh, delay not! Pray that your impulses may be directed heavenwards, and that you may realize in its fullest essence, in its unspeakable blessedness, the true life of the soul. Think who it is to whom you are causing disappointment by your delay!—the Son of God Himself! If you hang back from His proffered mercy, you are closing the gates of heaven against yourself; and the more securely they are barred by your backwardness and unbelief, so much the wider do the gates of hell open to receive you. You wish to "enjoy life" a little here, you say. That will not make up for the loss of life eternal. You value the opportunity granted to you here of cultivating the friendship of kindred spirits. What is friendship without life? and what is life without immortality? God forbid that we should cultivate friendship with beings who have immortal souls, without a thought that reaches beyond the grave—without anticipation of the riper fruits which our friendships may and will bear in heaven, if we cement them by the strongest of all ties, love to Christ. Yes! if you wish to be united in spirit by more than momentary ties with those whom

you regard and love, seek for them and for yourselves that which alone can give permanence and perennial beauty, even to the purest and noblest affections—life in Christ and in God!

Come, then, to Him who has called you, and is constantly urging you in the words of the Gospel. Other books contain stores of human wisdom; the Bible alone is the Book of life. May He, whose Spirit is life and truth, bring home to your souls the words of life, and make them bear fruit abundantly. May He prompt you to the act, and sustain you in the effort, of coming to Christ, and abiding in Him. And may your experience of the blessedness of a life of faith in the Son of God cause you to exclaim in all the fulness of joy and gratitude of which the believer's soul is capable, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!"

X.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ATTITUDE; OR, PRESSING TOWARDS THE MARK.

"*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before: I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*"—PHIL. III. 13, 14.

THE subject suggested by the text is one well suited for the consideration of Christians of every age, but especially of the young, who have more to look forward to than to look back upon; and are by their constitution more inclined to reach forward to the future than to dwell upon the past.

Let us consider, in order, the two states of mind indicated by St. Paul; the practical line of conduct adopted by him; the prospect open to him and to all Christians; and lastly, the manner in which we may best imitate the Apostle. And may the Holy Spirit direct us in our inquiry, and lead us into the paths of righteousness and faith, that we may find peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The two states of mind which St. Paul indicates are, first, that of satisfied contentment—apprehension of

salvation; secondly, that of eager striving—and of desire, as yet uncertain of accomplishment.

The first of these he lays no claim to. At a later period he could say, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me"[1] —a declaration in which the most unhesitating confidence, the most complete assurance, not only of *salvation,* but of a *crown,* is expressed. But now the Apostle counts not that he has apprehended. His state of mind, so far as he can be said to shadow forth any state of mind, is one of eager, anxious, unfulfilled desire—accompanied by hope, by faith, and consciousness of a calling. This is a state of mind which few Christians get beyond. To some a nearer glance into the mysteries of the unseen world is granted; to some a power of apprehending the perfect work of Christ is given in a high degree; in some a feeling of undoubted confidence in the love of God, and in the sanctifying influence of His Spirit takes full possession of the heart and soul, and joyous serenity takes the place of anxious striving. But by far the greater number of Christians must be content to say with Paul, "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended."

The declaration of so eminent a servant of God deserves our careful attention. It shows us, first, the true modesty which the saints of the Lord should preserve.

St. Paul had received enough manifestations of Divine

[1] 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

favour to make him feel satisfied of the love of God to him. Many a person has been lifted up in heart by far less signal instances of the Divine love than he received, who was "caught up into the third heaven and heard unspeakable things."

II. It shows us, also, that a state of mind which falls short of assured certainty of salvation is not inconsistent with eminent spiritual attainments. This may be borne in mind by such as are disposed to be faint-hearted and desponding. Although they may see others who are more advanced than themselves in the Christian life, and hear them tell of their experience, and of the sweet consolation of resting securely on the love and promises of God through Christ; although they may listen to their assurance that such a state is attainable, and feel dejected because their own experience does not testify to any such strong conviction that they are of the number of the saved; they have this to fall back upon, as a strong ground of hope and consolation—that St. Paul was once in their condition; that one of the brightest lights that burned on earth, and that shines among the constellations of heaven, could once only say, "I count not myself to have apprehended;" but that he attained to a higher state of confidence before his death. And though this may not be the lot of the believer; though his soul may never receive such an influx of life and light as that which poured as it were through open floodgates into the soul of Paul shortly before his martyrdom, yet be it remembered, that God has promised by the mouth of His Son our Lord, to all who believe in Him

with a living faith, and repent of their sins, pardon and salvation; and that if we once "commit our ways unto the Lord," He is able to guide our footsteps in the right way," and to "keep that good thing which we have committed to Him."

These are some of the most obvious lessons which this part of the text teaches us.

III. Though the apostle does not lay much stress on his state of mind, he does not lead us to suppose that his spirit is inactive: only instead of his glance being directed inwards, it is turned outwards. "This one thing I do; forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God, which is in Christ Jesus." This displays the most intense energy and activity of spirit. It shows—

Concentration of purpose. This *one thing* I do. It is an old saying, that if we would do anything well, we must be occupied with it alone. It is especially true of the one thing needful for the soul's salvation. He who desires to be saved must be content to forego anything which interferes with the working out of his salvation, and "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus."

But if the Christian contents himself with *one thing*, he must be very careful that it is not something trivial —some of the mere accessories of the Christian life—of which the most that can be said is, that they ought not to be left undone, if opportunity serve. Everything will depend upon the nature of the one thing which is chosen

as the purpose of our lives. Let us examine St. Paul's statement, "Forgetting those things which are behind . . . I press toward the mark."

The language here is metaphorical, borrowed from the Greek games. Paul speaks of himself as a runner, contending for a prize. Now, although the same truth which is conveyed in these words might be conveyed in other language, I think that the apostle is induced by the recollection of what a race was, to lay greater stress on this point—"forgetting those things which are behind."

A traveller must remember the way he has traversed, a general the ground over which his army has marched, a mariner the course over which he has sailed; but to a racer the past is nothing, the future everything. And so to the Christian. Viewing his life as a race, he must not look back; for that will check his progress, and ruin his hopes of attaining to the prize. I do not mean to say that is the only view of life. St. Paul himself speaks of it in widely different language. But in so far as the idea of earnest striving for a prize enters into our conception of the Christian life, so far is all retrospect dangerous.

It may occur to you to say—But may I not occasionally review the ground over which I have passed? may I not profit by the experience which I have gained, in order that I may avoid the things which were to me occasions of falling, and thus out of weakness become strong? Most assuredly you may: but what you should beware of is, dwelling complacently upon the past, like

a man who has surmounted a rapid, and then rests on his oars in the comparatively calm water above it, forgetful that the current is continually setting down stream, and that he runs a risk of being again entangled in the difficulties from which he was only extricated by the exertion of all his powers. If you have made any progress heavenward, thank God for it, and let your trust in Him for the future be redoubled by your recollection of the past; but let your aim be, whilst you are young and fresh and vigorous, before you are easily daunted by failure or disappointment, to press onward.

There may be some among you over whose present life the past throws a dark shadow, checking your onward progress, and leading you, by the recollection of former failures, to despair. To such I would address a few words.

Remember that the past belongs to Him who has recorded all that you have done or omitted to do. The present and the future are yours—yours to improve, or to waste. Let not the usefulness of present opportunities be marred by the retrospect of wasted efforts, of defeated aims, of indulgence in wilful sin, or a cowardly flinching from the path of duty. All these you may plead guilty to; but that is no reason why the same should recur again. You may have been weak, but God can give you strength. You may have been self-indulgent, but you have time to deny yourself. Let the abuse of the past stimulate you to make a good use of the present, rather than abuse that also by condemning yourselves, so as to prejudge your own case. If you should become over

confident and self-reliant, then you may do well to remember the past; but beware of indulging a morbid habit of retrospective inquiry—such as, whether a person who has committed such and such sins can ever obtain the favour of God, &c.: let not the springs of your present happiness be poisoned by the recollection of former sins. God is able to blot out all these, and to make you more than conqueror over the temptations which formerly overcame you.

Everything which deserves our attention teaches us the same lesson in different language. A view of human nature convinces us that happiness is to be found in the energetic use of the higher faculties of the mind, with a reasonable prospect of eventual success in gaining that which we set before us as the especial end and object of our endeavours. This condition is satisfied in the most remarkable degree by the Christian's life. There is the energy of the highest part of the soul—the full employment of the spiritual part of man's nature at the present time, and a reaching forward in heart and hope to a glorious future, where the imperfections of earthly happiness shall no longer vex the soul, but where all shall be perfect, and corresponding to the highest desires of the Christian's enlarged and purified faculties. The mind of man cannot fathom the vast capacities of happiness which will be the lot of the saints in heaven; but as we know that there is no one point in which men differ from each other in this world more than in their various capacities of enjoyment, so we may imagine an infinite increase in the soul's happiness when it is freed

from all disturbing influences, and able to bask in the unclouded presence of the Sun of Righteousness.

It was to this prize that the apostle pressed forward. Before he reached it, before he gained his heavenly crown, an earthly crown was in store for him—not such as the children of the world strive for, but that which we imagine as decorating the brows of some of the Lord's saints —the crown of martyrdom. A hard struggle through the remainder of his life, and a painful and agonizing death; these formed part of the future then hidden from the eyes of the apostle, or only dimly revealed to him. Whatever might be his earthly prospect, there lay beyond the grave an infinitely glorious vision, of which some rays had penetrated through time and space, and stamped an image on the mind of Paul, when he was taken up into Paradise, and heard unspeakable things. Among the things which God had prepared for them that loved Him, the apostle included his own crown— the crown of victory to be awarded by the righteous Judge to one of His faithful followers, one of the leaders of the noble army of martyrs.

Doubtless to him the vision was a very distinct one. He had seen his crucified and ascended Saviour, and heard His voice. The whole mystery of godliness as it was to be unfolded to the Church had been specially revealed to him. His life after his introduction to the apostles at Jerusalem had been constantly devoted to the great work of enlightening the Gentiles, and preaching Jesus Christ, incarnate, crucified, ascended, and received into glory. Every soul that he was the means of res-

cuing from the dominion of Satan, and of winning for Christ, was to him a link between the visible and invisible, between the temporal and eternal. And when his race was nearly run, when he had been spared to preach the Gospel in the metropolis of the heathen world, and there seemed no further work left for him to do on earth, his anticipations of a heavenly crown must have been more than ever vivid, connected as they were with the person of his Divine Master who had appeared to him in glory.

Yet these anticipations did not in the least degree affect the habitual tone of humble resignation and self-abasement which characterised the apostle. At the same time that he could say of the saints at Rome, "For our conversation is in heaven"—and of none could he say this with more truth than of himself—he wrote, "What things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ," and stated his highest ambition to be that he might win Christ, and be found in Him, not having his own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, "the righteousness which is of God by faith." He appears to have foreseen that he should be a fellow-sufferer with Christ, "being made conformable to His death." Yet not daunted by this prospect—not appalled by the anticipation of sufferings such as Romans knew how to inflict at the bidding of a Nero, the apostle declares his eagerness to go on, even to the end—"I press," he says, "towards the mark for the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

There is something noble in the attitude of the human

being who realizes so intensely the world beyond the grave. An attitude of constant reaching forward to an object, in itself noble and desirable, ennobles him who strives.

It is a noble thing to read of, and must be a noble thing to see, the devoted leader of a forlorn hope advancing in the teeth of well-known and calculated perils at the head of his little band.

It was a noble spectacle that was presented to the world by the hero of Cawnpore and Lucknow, when, undismayed by dangers, and unsatisfied by victories won, he pressed on to the relief of the beleaguered garrison.

It is a noble thing to see any human being under any circumstances unflinchingly carrying out a settled purpose, when that purpose accords with the revealed will of Him in whom we live and move and have our being.

But it is above everything else noble and deserving of admiration, when man forgets himself in the service of his God; when the creature's ardent desire is to be united to his Creator; and when his whole life passes beyond the sphere of sublunary things into the region of immortal spirits. Then the mortal is transfigured; in the service of a higher Being he performs functions which go far beyond himself; his thoughts dwell not on the little details of life—how *can* they if his conversation is in heaven? But certain great and leading desires stamp themselves on his mind, "to know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings;" these are the subjects about

which a strong yearning springs up in the mind of the Christian; and his great ultimatum is that of St. Paul, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

My brethren, it is *well* for us that such thoughts should sometimes be brought before us; it is *better* that we should sometimes entertain them ourselves; *best of all* is it that we should never lose sight of them. Whatever may be your age, you are not too young to think of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. You are not too young to take up the attitude of the apostle, to "forget the things that are behind, and reach forth unto those things that are before." Your efforts will contain in them the germs of true nobility, if they be directed by a sense of duty, and stimulated by a desire to do the will of God. Therefore I say fearlessly to all of you, that in spite of the great disparity of your gifts, it is in your power to imitate the great apostle to the Gentiles, and like him to worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus. It is in your power to throw yourselves upon the promises of God in such a way as to become partakers of His mercy through Christ; to obtain a full, free, and sufficient pardon for your sins through faith in the atonement of Christ; to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, so that it will be a less difficult task to you to forget the things that are behind; to satisfy yourselves by the efforts that you are making, that God's Holy Spirit is striving in and with you, moulding your thoughts, raising your desires, correcting what is amiss, encouraging

you in what is right, suggesting to you occasions of prayer, and making intercession with you, so that the words breathed by your lips will be no longer the feeble aspirations of a young and mortal breast, but a portion of that spirit of devotion which animates the souls of the believers in Christ throughout the whole world, and which spirit issues forth from God, and returns to Him. Oh, be not discouraged by the past! but if you have turned back despairing of success; if the prize of the high calling of God in Christ seems more distant to you than when you first started in pursuit of it; take comfort from the words of the apostle, "Forget the things that are behind." It may not be easy to forget the allurements of sin; it may be very difficult to avoid all return into habits of indolence and self-indulgence, to take up habits of prayer which have suffered interruption, and to shake off the influence of associates who have led you astray: nevertheless, if you once realize by faith the actual existence of heaven, and learn to regard this life on earth as a preparation for it; if your minds apprehend the fact of Jesus Christ, who once took upon Him the form of man, and died to save you from eternal condemnation, sitting at the right hand of God, and making intercession for struggling, fainting believers; and if you believe in your hearts that He is able to save you from the power of sin and Satan; with such ideas as these strongly impressed upon your minds, and such a belief dominant in your heart, you will be able to forget the things which once diverted you from the right course; you will be able to pursue nobler objects of

desire, and, like the great apostle to the Gentiles, and in common with the whole body of believers, and all who walk in the Spirit, you too will be enabled to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And that your strivings may be crowned with success, may He of His infinite mercy grant.

[*Feb.* 1859.]

XI.

ON CHRISTIAN MANLINESS.

"When I became a man, I put away childish things" (ὅτε δὲ γέγονα ἀνήρ, κατήργηκα τὰ τοῦ νηπίου).—1 Cor. xiii. 11.

This text was introduced by St. Paul as an illustration of a subject which has already been brought before you—the difference between human and divine knowledge. It is not with reference to that highly interesting and important subject that I propose to consider it to-day. I would rather, by God's blessing, draw your attention from the thing illustrated to the illustration itself; from the change which is to take place in our faculties hereafter, to the change which takes place in our conduct here below; and upon the conclusions which we arrive at in our inquiry, I would found an exhortation to Christian manliness.

Before proceeding to any special application of that which the apostle enunciates or suggests, I would invite you to consider the matter in its general aspect.

I. As to the facts of the case; and

II. As to the rights.

As regards the facts, I presume that no one will be disposed to gainsay the general statement—that a change

takes place in the mind, the tastes, the pursuits, and the conduct of most individuals when they approach the threshold of manhood. Although, here and there, instances may occur of childishness being carried on past the bounds of manhood; yet, in the great majority of cases, a distaste for childish amusements, and an abandonment of childish pursuits, take place, if not before, at least when the man begins to grapple with the realities of life.

This is so generally true, that it sounds like a truism. Our own experience teaches us what the master writers of all times have pointed out, namely, that each age has its pursuits and amusements, and that a great change takes place before the helpless infant becomes the spirited youth; or the beardless boy, just freed from restraint, and delighting in the sports of the open field, grows into the ambitious politician or regular man of business. We know, too, that in the new stage a certain contempt is felt for that which preceded; so much so, that we often see people inclined to disown in after years the follies of their youth, as if, forsooth, their personal identity could be affected by the change in their lives.

St. Paul, indeed, refers to the subject not as requiring proof, but as affording an illustration of things spiritual. Now men do not illustrate the better known by the less known; they rather select their proofs and illustrations from that which is acknowledged, if not universally, at least generally.

Thus St. Paul, by the analogy of an indisputable fact

—namely, that he, like most other men, on attaining to maturity, gave up childish pursuits—argues that the affairs of this world will not interest the dwellers in heaven: especially that *human* knowledge, with its narrow limits and many imperfections, will be absorbed in the flood of *spiritual* knowledge that shall be poured into the soul hereafter.

II. As to the rights of the case.

When we talk about "putting away childish things," and quote St. Paul as our example, we ought to discriminate between what is a matter of right and duty, and what is a matter of indifference or even of wrong. There are some qualities of childhood which render their possessor meet for the kingdom of heaven. When Jesus said to His disciples, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein," we cannot suppose that He intended Christians to put away the characteristics of children—humility, innocence, and trust—and to clothe themselves in that ambitious pride which He rebuked in His disciples, in subtlety, and in unbelief.

There are other qualities which are the ornament of social life, which no one would do well to check, whether in children or older persons. To take an example. There is a certain playfulness of character which belongs especially to childhood, but which is always graceful and amiable, lending a charm to social life, and tending to alleviate misery and suffering. Such was the sportiveness which the victims of tyranny displayed at Athens—Theramenes in the senate, and Socrates in prison; and

which in our own country accompanied to the scaffold Sir T. More, Anne Boleyne, and others. That which had shone so brightly in their lives shed a halo over their deaths. It is not this which we should seek to put away.

Other qualities are shared by children with the greatest men. The simple faith, the direct aim, the earnestness of purpose, the intense realization of spiritual things which we often may observe in children, are inseparable from genius. It is only a great man who dares to be simple—to cast aside mere conventionalities—to go directly to his point without circumlocution in speech, or swerving in action. It is only a great man who scorns to act a part, who sees through the outer veil of things the essence of truth, who beholds the Infinite embracing the Finite, and the spiritual animating the carnal. Yet all these qualities are found in children; the child possesses them more unconsciously than the philosopher, the poet, the artist; but they are no less truly present with him. I find more resemblance between a child and the greatest of the human race--a Shakespeare—a Newton—a M. Angelo—than between the same child and our clever writers, our skilful debaters, our successful pleaders. Into whatever line of life we pass, we observe abundance of energy, and shrewdness and cultivated talents, but little of the character of the child—little of those qualities which are the condition of human greatness in its true sense. Are these to be put away among other childish things? God forbid. Again, St. Paul speaks of becoming a man

as a higher state than that of childhood. Doubtless it is. Doubtless matured powers are entitled to rank higher than incipient powers; the fruit than the flower; the fulfilment than the promise; the reality than the hope. But in estimating the advantages of manhood some discrimination is to be used. There are some qualities which the child regards with superstitious reverence in the man, and on the possession of which the man often arrogates to himself great superiority over the child; as, for instance, the shrewdness and knowledge which experience of the world gives. As regards such experience, the truth seems to lie in this—that the more we know of God's world the better for us; but of the world in its ruined state we may well shrink from the possession of absolute knowledge. Let none think that experience of evil is a great privilege. Consider what the knowledge of good and evil cost our first parents—those whom God created in His own image. No less than the forfeiture of Paradise. Hence we need not be eager to learn how wicked the world is. Indifference to vice is not to be admitted as a true characteristic of manhood.

Dealings with mankind teach us that we cannot believe all that we see and hear. Some people tell us a very small proportion. Is it necessary to acquire early in life a suspicious habit of mind?

Doubtless we shall do well to be on our guard against deceit and treachery. As Christians we are bound to recognise as a fact the presence of evil in this fallen world, and we ought not rashly to expose ourselves to that evil from which we daily pray to be delivered.

But it cannot be, and is not intended that anxious suspicions should poison the springs of our spiritual life. Such a condition is to be deprecated for the man, and how much more for the child? "Becoming a man" cannot in any true sense of the words mean acquiring a habit of suspicion.

Nor is it a true characteristic of manhood to become old in heart before old in head; to assume an indifference to everything, because, forsooth, the pleasures of the world are mingled with pain—because from the fountain of delight "rises a bitter taste and poisons all the draught." Such language better befits the jaded voluptuary, or the disappointed politician, than the man who strives to fit himself by his life here for the life that shall be hereafter. Is it no enjoyment to breathe the pure air of the hills, to feel the pulses of life bounding with health, to repose our wearied bodies after the toil of the day? Is it no enjoyment to acquire knowledge in its purest forms, to trace the hand of creative wisdom in each tree and flower, to ascertain the laws which the Almighty has imposed upon His creatures, for the better government of the world? Are there no objects of an inspiring kind in the social world in which we live, no noble and pure minds to become acquainted with, no great ends to be wrought out for the good of the community? Is there no misery to be relieved? Are there no grounds for believing that the endeavour to imitate Christ in doing good to others, even to the thankless, will be abundantly repaid to us?

We need not answer such questions. Your own

hearts must in every case suggest an answer. Therefore let no one impose upon you by desiring you to give up your birthright, to abandon the buoyant hopes, the mirth, the trusting, loving heart of childhood and youth, for the gloomy reserve, the suspicious bearing, the indifference of disappointed life. "This generation is weary from the cradle," said a French statesman and philosopher of his countrymen. Perhaps it might be said with some partial degree of justice of us. Let it not be said of any here. It is false philosophy to anticipate the cares, as it is to anticipate the amusements of later years. May you be kept pure in heart, fresh in mind, and vigilant against but not always suspicious of evil, that you may enter upon life in a true spirit, and may avoid the rocks on which many have split, who are now passing a joyless, useless existence, casting a shadow on the sunshine of life, unconscious of the higher interests which affect the soul, dead to the life of the world, centred in themselves.

III. Having now glanced at the facts and the rights of the case, and having examined the negative side of the question, let me say a few words on the positive side.

There are some great changes which mark the epoch of manhood.

One is, the assumption of responsibility. This, in its highest sense, *i.e.* when entertained towards God, makes us bold in things regarding man, and independent in our judgment. Self-approval takes the place of the approbation of others, and we think more of being true to ourselves, than obedient to other men.

This has its bad as well as its good side. We should never lose sight of the approbation of *good* men, as a test and acknowledgment of our actions, only second to that of God. But in cases of conscience we must be better judges than any human arbitrator, as we know our own motives, and not merely our outward actions. Therefore, so long as we keep our own judgment uncontaminated—that is, so long as we do not tamper with conscience—it will be well for us that we should be self-reliant, rather than lean upon the judgment of others. But it would be a great perversion of the truth to lay down, as a rule, that in order to act a manly part, every one should please himself, and should be deaf to admonition, heedless of reproof, and careless of shame. If we are not to rely upon the judgment of others, and if our own judgment be fallible, we must have some infallible standard to refer to. And this we have at hand always in the Word of God.

As we advance in life, we should learn to think more of duty, less of success. Knowing how often merit is unacknowledged, and that the world's prizes are given away according to a very uncertain and fluctuating standard, we should learn to content ourselves with doing our duty in our own sphere, and leave the issue to God.

There is a certain self-denial implied in putting away what we once loved—"the hopes and fears of early days," and objects hallowed by many a sweet association: and we must prepare ourselves for a certain amount of effort, aye, and for resistance to that effort, arising from our own hearts.

It is not merely the development of our old self which we are to aim at: though, in some respects, the child is father to the man, yet the text implies, and it is generally acknowledged, that some things suit childhood which do not suit manhood. There is to be a forsaking; a resolute act of the will; a choice of a path, and by necessity an abandonment of another.

Many young people are influenced by the opinion of others, who are neither better nor wiser than themselves, but simply older, or more unrestrained—bolder in iniquity; who have cast off the veil of youthful purity and timidity, and assumed the brazen aspect of worldliness. This pliability and want of self-reliance often leads them into great errors, utterly alien to their own characters, as well as to the law of God. This, then, is to be put away. Boys are apt to think it a very fine thing to be clever, and rather a poor and mean thing to be industrious: just as if the possession of natural faculties was a credit to them; or as if making the best use of their faculties could be discreditable. This spurious reverence, this mere intellect-worship, ought to be put away, the sooner the better; both for the highest reasons, namely, considerations of our responsibility to God, and for the practical reason, that in these days of restless energy and competition, none will get on who do not work.

Another phase of childishness is, thinking time is of no value, that opportunities lost may be recovered, and that there will always be an opening for amendment. But this, alas! is fallacious, and must be put away.

Another is, mixing up things of a sportive with things of a serious nature; indulging a mirthful disposition, excellent in its place and at the proper time, at unfitting times, and upon improper occasions; a desire to turn work into play; a disinclination to apply the mind steadfastly; a frivolous habit of interrupting studies by idle talk, and thereby diverting the attention to trifles; leaning on the help of others, instead of striving to acquire increased powers by honest, resolute, independent efforts; all these are manifestations of a childish temper, which no one, who is concerned in the education of this College, can have failed to observe.

Such manifestations are infinite; and we might as well attempt to cut off one by one the heads of another hydra as to deal with them in their developed state, and in detail. We must go to the root and ground of the matter, and this is involved in the question, not whether we are awakened to our true temporal interests, but whether our heart is right with God, and whether we desire and seek after that heavenly wisdom, which will give a consistent tone and character to all our pursuits and undertakings.

Let us, if we would put away childish things, tamper no longer with the interests of our immortal souls. Let us seek first of all to make our peace with God, not resting till we have obtained pardon for our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ, and till we have brought ourselves into spiritual communion with our heavenly Father, through the Holy Ghost working in us. Till we have done this, the whole of life appears mere trifling.

And no age is too early to begin the struggle with evil, and the earnest reaching after good, which the Christian must maintain through life.

Especially those who have recently witnessed a good confession in the sight of God and this congregation, that they are of the number of Christ's faithful soldiers and servants—those, I mean, who have been recently confirmed—are called upon to assume the responsibility of choosing between good and evil.

Those also who are soon to leave this College for the life of the universities, or for active life, civil or military, are bound to put away childish things.

Whether as members of the commonwealth of God, who have received your full franchise, or as members of the educated classes, who will be called upon to fill, ere long, a place in Church or State—looking to your future, whatever that may be, I call upon you, I beseech you, to put away childish things.

If any of you feel that you have hitherto wasted opportunities, turned a deaf ear to remonstrances, set a bad example to your younger companions, or in any way failed to assume that earnestness, that resolute purpose, that soberness of demeanour, which should characterise the Christian student, bethink yourselves that you stand on the verge of manhood; that your own happiness, the welfare of your companions, the credit of the place of your education, and the good of your country—above all, the law of God, and the judgment to come, require you to put away childish things.

There is another aspect of the question, the theological one. We know the Jews were under a dispensation, which is frequently alluded to in Scripture, in terms which present to our minds the idea of a minor under restraints, as, "the Law was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ." Now the new covenant differs from the old in this respect.

It allows more freedom of action; it deals less with outward conduct and its details, than with motives of the heart.

It calls men's minds from an external and ceremonial worship to the adoration of the heart.

It sets before us the service of God as a reasonable service, in which not only our interest is concerned, but our sympathies are enlisted, and our powers of mind called forth.

As the Jew, renouncing the ceremonial ordinances of the Law, and adopting the more reasonable doctrines of Christianity, might fitly say, "I have put away childish things, I have assumed the privileges of a man," so the Christian, emerging from a state in which his actions were regulated by an external law, to a state in which he stands before his God, with no Mediator but Jesus, with none to prompt him but the Holy Spirit, holding no other credentials than God's own commands written in the Bible, and assuming the responsibility of an accountable agent, called in the presence of men and angels to the service of the Lord his God, may with greater force exclaim, "I have put away childish things." *He* will say these words with

truth who shows himself mindful of the great privileges as well as responsibilities of his profession, who, looking forward to the eternal inheritance of the saints in light, dedicates an adequate portion of his time and energies to the work of preparation for that heavenly state, praying for grace to learn, and strength to perform, the will of God, who, knowing the sins that have most easily beset him in times past, strives manfully against them, both for his own soul's sake, and for the sake of Christ who died to free him from his sins, and rose again, that having obtained the victory over the enemy of souls, all who believe in Him might through Him be more than conquerors in all things. He, lastly, will truly say these words, who, by constant prayer, and diligent study of God's Word, becomes acquainted with the will of his heavenly Father, and imbued with the mind of Christ, and bears about with him a constant sense of the Divine presence; avoiding, as displeasing to God, all sin and folly, all childish frivolity and petulance, and all that is unbecoming and unworthy of one who has attained to Christian manhood. Such an one will be able to say, without exaggeration, and with the witness of a good conscience before God, "I have become a man, I have put away childish things."

[*March* 27, 1859.]

XII.

SIN, THE DEFILEMENT OF MAN.

"*There is nothing from without a man, which entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they which defile the man.*"—MARK VII. 15.

No conversations recorded of any man who ever lived are so remarkable for statements of general principles as those which the Evangelists have recorded of our blessed Lord. Without any apparent plan or method—any design to draw the conversation in a particular direction, Jesus was always able to give to the most trifling question a profitable turn, and out of the narrow prejudices of the Jews, to draw matter from which the universal Church might learn the broadest and most salutary lessons.

The question put to our Lord by the Pharisees, "Why do not thy disciples wash their hands when they eat bread?" recorded in the parallel passage of St. Matthew, amounted to this: "Why do your followers act in a contrary way to us, who profess in all matters of social and religious observance to follow the precepts of Moses?" It was in fact a challenge to the new Teacher to account for certain discrepancies between the habits of His disciples and the customs which the most highly educated of the Jews cherished as sacred.

Our Lord accepted the challenge; not in the way which they looked for, but by a severe and well-deserved rebuke to his questioners for having neglected the spirit of the law of Moses, at the same time that they prided themselves on the minute observance of the letter.

He appears to have treated their question as belonging to a general class—as equivalent to this, "Why do not your disciples conform to the outward observances which we regard as essential marks of a true attachment to the Mosaic religion?" Into the question of personal cleanliness our Lord did not enter. That was enjoined by the law of Moses for weighty and sufficient reasons. In all countries cleanliness is conducive to health, and it is especially so in the East, where a neglect of it is almost sure to bring on diseases of the skin. There was also a peculiar reason for the injunctions relating to this head, namely, that they had especial reference to the sacrificial system, which it was necessary to commend to the people by every rite and observance which could convey an additional sense of religious veneration, purity, and sanctity. So far as the religious teachers among the Jews complied with these ordinances, they did right. They did right in teaching the people everywhere to lift up pure hands. They did right in making the outward purity of the body correspond to the inward purity of the heart. But they did wrong in making the latter of less importance than the former. They did wrong in ascribing to such trifling acts—whatever significance such acts might originally have possessed—as washing of pots and cups, any healing and saving

influence on the soul. Consequently they did wrong in making these, or any other merely external rites, the tests of true religion. And, therefore, our Lord *rebuked* them. Therefore He showed them how their traditions, instead of being auxiliary to the law of God—instead of carrying out its spirit, and showing its application to all cases of human conduct, actually hindered and made of none effect that pure and holy law. The instance which Jesus brought forward was one of the strongest that could be imagined. It was an instance of false interpretation of the law of God, whereby it was made to contradict a law of human nature—a law which is observed wherever man is in the least degree raised in the social scale above the savage state; namely, that children when grown up should support their parents in their old age.

And this was not a single instance. Our Lord added, "and many such like things do ye." What a disclosure of judicial perverseness is here presented to us, my brethren! Was there ever a more flagrant case of teachers misleading their disciples? From this exposure of the Pharisees and Scribes, Jesus turned to the people, in order that He might not leave them without sound instruction in things pertaining to their daily walk, and when He had called them all unto Him, "He said unto them, Hearken unto me, every one of you, and understand; there is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they which defile the man."

Now, here is a precept of a very broad character,

Taken in its literal sense, it refers to all that we eat and drink.

I. Let us examine it in this sense. Our Lord, it would appear, told the Galilean multitude that they could not be defiled by anything that they ate or drank. This seems rather startling to us. Doubtless there were gluttons in those days, as there are now. Doubtless there were persons who indulged their love of drink to a greater extent than was necessary to quench their thirst. Did such persons avoid defilement? Ask yourselves, brethren; question your own experience. Go into any town or village in England. Watch the doors of a public-house on pay-night. See the men who quit it. Mark them as they reel homeward. Listen to their profane and incoherent language. See them, perhaps, wallowing by the roadside, unable to walk. Ask them the next day why their eyes are bloodshot; why their head is aching; why they are unfit to pray, if it be Sunday; to work if it be a week-day. "Only a little drop of drink," you are told. Go a little higher, as it is called, in society. Look at the respectable tradesman, the man of business, the farmer, the professional man; where can you find a hundred of them without one glutton or drunkard? People say of such a man, "He is no one's enemy but his own; he is very kind-hearted, but he has his fits now and then." Why is it, then, that his wife and family, or his dependents, and all with whom he has to do, suffer from his neglect—from his periodical or occasional fits of ill temper or recklessness, brought on by drink, or stupidity and indolence, the

result of over-much eating? Are those habits of life, by which the reason is enfeebled and debased, and by which the body becomes bloated and enervated, no defilement to the man? Yes, doubtless, only it is not that which entereth into man that can defile him—whether it be meat or drink—but the giving way to an unchecked and unreasoning appetite. This it is which defiles the man, and lowers him in the estimation of all who judge rightly. It is not the use of fermented liquors, which when used temperately conduce to health, but the abuse of them, which is harmful and degrading. It is not the partaking of food, whether of a common or of a choice and rare description, which constitutes gluttony; but it is eating for eating's sake, because of the savour of the viands, and taking more than is enough to satisfy hunger, which is a vice, which is a sin against nature, for nature always tells us when we have had enough.

Habits of intemperance in eating and drinking are early acquired. Perhaps greediness is the most common fault of children, and those who are but a little removed from the state of childhood. A craving for food at all times—a love of dainties, and of such things as contain little nourishment, and when eaten in large quantities are hurtful—these are common vices of childhood and boyhood. If any of my younger hearers feel that they are prone to greediness, let them confess with shame, that they have given way to a sin which will assuredly find them out and punish them. The signs of self-indulgence which appear so prominently in the middle-aged man, are not more painful to the eye of those who

study the character from first to last, than the symptoms of greediness in the child or schoolboy. In that eagerness for dainties, especially if forbidden, we see the germs of that vice which attained to such an enormous height in some of the Roman emperors, and which—although the present tone of society discountenances gross excesses of the table—is still too prevalent.

It is not confined to one class, but runs through all: medical men tell us that a large proportion of the diseases which they are called in to prescribe for, arises from over eating. A most humiliating fact, truly; and one which renders it needful that we should draw a distinction between the act, and the appetite which urges us to the act of eating. The former is simply mechanical. It is a means of providing the necessary aliment to the body. It neither defiles nor ennobles; it is of a neutral character. The latter—the appetite which urges us to take food—is one of the natural impulses implanted in us by the Almighty for self-preservation. Hence, there is nothing in the appetite for food, which is degrading or elevating: it is simply a question of quantity; directly we overstep the bounds which nature suggests, the indulgence of our appetite becomes a sin. But it is not a physical infirmity: it is a moral one. Hence, though gluttony is not one of the sins included in our Lord's catalogue, it may fairly be reckoned among the things which proceed out of the heart.

II. It is no subject for self-congratulation, but a fearful picture of inward depravity, which our Lord presents to

us in the list which he gives: "From within, out of the heart of man, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these things come from within, and defile the man."

These are they that defile the man. These prove him to have become corrupt within; to be under the influence of an evil spirit; to be alienated in heart and will from God, in whose image he was created. As often as he gives way to any of the evil propensities which prompt him to sin, so often does he widen the breach between himself and the God whom he has offended—so often does he stamp himself as the servant of him whose chief desire is to frustrate the merciful designs of Providence, and induce the sinner to cast off all allegiance to God.

These are they that defile a man. It is not the victims of brutal lusts and passions who are defiled, but the perpetrators of those acts by which society is outraged, and which, if suffered to remain unchecked and unpunished, would produce a very hell on earth—they it is who are defiled. The world acknowledges this in some cases, as murder, theft, deceit; in these the law regards the injured person as the sufferer, bestowing pity, not contempt. In others, society seems to consider that disgrace attaches to the injured person; a conclusion which is only just, when the sufferer has been guilty of gross imprudence, or such provocation as to occasion the wrong, although it could not excuse it; or lastly, when there has been any connivance on the

side of the injured party, and where the breath of slander is not unmixed with truth.

But there is no doubt at all that the wilful indulgence of any sin defiles the sinner. Whatever verdict society may pass upon sins of a particular kind, regarding, for instance, with undue leniency in the one sex those sins which are looked upon as so enormous in the other; yet the eye of eternal justice is not blinded; it discerns between the tempter and the tempted, the seducer and the seduced, and does not mete out by any partial law to the one condonence and pardon, to the other abhorrence and condemnation. No! man may palliate in man, or youth gloss over in youth, the sins of unchastity, "for fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind;" but let us not deceive ourselves, God is not mocked. He sees in the heart "evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications," and so long as His eye rests on these, so long as He sees the purity of the spring defiled, He never can regard with pleasure the waters that flow from it, nor yet the intellectual gifts, the bravery, or the energy, which exist sometimes in conjunction with moral pollution. Oh! let me call upon you, dearly beloved, in the words of the apostle, as you are strangers and pilgrims here, "abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul;" and let me beseech you to bear that exhortation in mind not only where you are fenced round and guarded from evil—not only here, not only at the universities, not only in civilized England, but also in the countries where some of you may soon be destined to play your part in life—in India, or some other of our distant

dependencies, where your only restraint will be your own conscience, your only censor and witness, God. Remember, then, in far distant lands, when the example of others, and the withdrawal of society's censure, and the apparent licence given to sin, might tempt you to follow the evil desires of your own hearts, that once at least in your native land a message was conveyed to you, based on God's written word, bidding you to curb with an iron hand all lawless desires, and exhorting you to maintain, by the innocency of your lives, the true dignity of your Christian profession; fighting the battle against impurity of every kind, first in your own hearts, and then wherever it may raise its front, whether in rude or in civilized society, in Anglo-Saxon or foreigner, in Mussulman or Hindoo. If every one who leaves this place of education obtains that mastery over self, which by the aid of God's Holy Spirit you may obtain, there would be some ground for hoping that an effectual witness might be raised up to the truth of that ancient saying, that modesty is an ingredient in true manliness; and that by your testimony, and still more by your example, a step might be attained towards the effectual repression of one of the monster evils of the day, an evil which is not to be checked by legislative enactments, nor platform oratory, nor leading articles—though all of these are good in their way—but is to be battled with and overcome in the hearts of the youth of England, of which number ye are.

The error which our Lord rebuked in the Scribes and Pharisees, that of regarding our conduct as the conse-

quence of our outward circumstances, and not as the expression of our inward affections and desires, is not only false, but mischievous.

It produces a false standard in worldly matters. It leads us to cultivate mere externals; to live for the furniture of life; to waste our time and opportunities of doing good.

It produces a false standard in spiritual matters also. It leads us to think more of the good we can get from others, than of the good we can do of ourselves, with the aid of God's Holy Spirit.

I do not desire to undervalue the advantages of good example and precept, and the silent eloquence of a really good life. Nor would I deny the influence of external circumstances in disposing the heart to good or evil. That is a fact in human nature which is too patent—too universal—to be gainsaid. But I would remind you that these circumstances do not proceed out of a man.

The real work is with our own hearts. Not that which acts upon us will judge us in the last day, but our own actions, words, and thoughts. These are our principal enemies—"The lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life." Against these let us wage war; not against our outward circumstances. Let us not say hereafter, "If it had not been for such and such companions, or such and such incentives to vice, I should not now be leading a life of sin, or have sinned in times past, from which course I was mercifully plucked as a brand from the burning;" but, "If I had not indulged my sinful appetites and

passions, if I had kept my temper under control, I should not have given the enemy of my soul cause to triumph over me."

The season of Lent is well suited for self-examining, and sober meditation. Let me repeat now an exhortation which has been addressed to you before, to "Consider your ways." It is not our wish to pry into the secrets of your hearts. Rather we would exhort you to open your hearts to God. If you do so, depend upon it you will be ashamed of every lurking sin, and will be disposed to flee to the cross of Christ, praying that your sins, which are as scarlet, may become white as snow; so that you may obtain pardon and justification through faith in Christ.

Again, it is not our wish to prescribe to you ways and means of self-mortification. We leave that to the Church of Rome, and those whose sympathies lie with a religion of externals. We take our stand upon the words of scripture—the words of Jesus—and bid you strike at the root of all selfishness and sin, where it lies, in the depths of your hearts. Abstinence from particular kinds of food, or the renouncing of particular amusements, will not compensate for the want of watchful prayer, and communion with God. The most that such observances can do, is to leave the spirit freer to meditate on heavenly things; but honest and prayerful self-examination, revealing, as it will assuredly do, many things which are at variance with the law of God, will by the grace of God's Holy Spirit lead you to repentance and amendment of life, to a stricter confor-

mity to the precepts of God's Word, and (by a natural process, analogous to that by which a tree sheds its withered leaves) to the abandonment of habits of self-indulgence—whether of greediness, or indolence, or whatever may be your besetting sins—so that you may gradually become conformed to the image of Jesus Christ here below, and having walked in dutiful obedience and innocency of life here, may be received hereafter into His glorious kingdom, there to be made partakers of the riches of that inheritance which as yet eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive, but which God hath prepared for those who unfeignedly love Him. Then shall you know the full extent of the Beatitude uttered by Jesus on the Mount, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

[*Ash Wednesday*, 1859.]

XIII.

THE STRAIT GATE: A SERMON FOR LENT.

"Then said one unto Him, Lord, are there few that be saved? And He said unto them, Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able."—LUKE XIII. 23, 24.

IT is difficult to imagine a more awful and solemn subject than that which is unfolded in these words. The eternal state of the millions who have been born and died since the world began, and the future destiny of the thousands of human beings we see around us, afford subjects for endless speculation. Many a time it has been asked, and it will be asked again and again, as here one asked our Lord, "Are there few that be saved?" And men's hearts, oppressed with the weight of the answer here returned, have been fain to seek out arguments whereby to prove the way of life to be one of less difficulty, one more frequented, and one on which a hope might be built for the thoughtless multitudes who have passed away, and are hourly passing away from the face of the earth.

Yet, although we may qualify to the utmost of our power the words of our Lord, though we may look abroad in the most charitable and hopeful spirit, we cannot blot out of the word of God that terrible

announcement, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Nor can we lay the flattering unction to our souls that the words were spoken as men often speak when engaged in argument, namely, in a rhetorical tone, or with more or less of exaggeration. For is it not written, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away"? And if so, the word of Christ, that many shall seek in vain to secure an entrance into the kingdom of heaven, is a truth which must abide until the final judgment, when it will receive its confirmation in the sight of men and angels.

My object in bringing before you to-day a truth so solemn and terrible is not simply to alarm you, but to awaken you to a serious consideration of your spiritual state. If, from the contemplation of the inevitable doom of those who miss the way of salvation revealed to mankind in the Book of God's Word, you are led to seek the aid of God's Holy Spirit, to examine your ways, and to shake off that soul-destroying slothfulness into which we are all so prone to fall, my object will be partly attained. It will, however, be more fully attained, if the result of your earnest strivings should be an intimate union with the Son of God, so that you may find Him to be "the way, the truth, and the life," and also being found in Him, may become partakers of a righteousness not your own, but communicated to you by the Holy Ghost, so that you may be saved from the wrath to come, and be living witnesses of the power of the gospel in transforming earthly affections into

heavenly, and enabling you to purge your consciences from dead works, to serve the living and true God.

The text brings before us several collateral subjects on which it would be easy to enlarge, but on which we must content ourselves with briefly touching in connexion with the main subject, which is, *the difficulty of the way of salvation, and the necessity of earnest striving.*

I. One of these collateral subjects is the Jewish notion about the privileges of the chosen people, which perhaps suggested the inquiry, "Are there few that be saved?" It must be borne in mind that our Lord on a previous occasion had pointed out the existence of the broad and the narrow way, and had stated the fact that many go in at the wide gate that leadeth to destruction, whereas few find the narrow way which leadeth unto life. It is possible that our Lord's question on the present occasion referred to that portion of the Sermon on the Mount:[1] but the words used seem like a quotation from Esdras,[2] "There be many created, but few shall be saved."

Now, whether the question addressed to our Lord proceeded from mere speculative curiosity, or from a desire to know what ground the Jews had for claiming exclusive privileges, as children of faithful Abraham, the answer given may be considered as decisive—decisive against regarding the salvation of souls as a speculative matter, or a matter of statistics; equally decisive, too, against the notion of the whole Jewish race being included in the promise of salvation, irrespectively of their personal efforts.

[1] Matt. vii. 13, 14. [2] 2 Esdras viii. 3.

Now, from both of these views we may draw a lesson :—

(1) As regards what we may call the *statistics* of religion. Until we have made our peace with God, and have given evidence of a true conversion by being conformed to the image of Christ, we have no business to intermeddle even in thought with the spiritual concerns of others, or to calculate the proportion which the numbers of the saved will bear to the numbers of the lost, in the world to come.

(2) As regards the notion of a privileged community, in virtue of belonging to which there is reason to hope that we shall receive spiritual blessings denied to others.

Our Lord's words point to the necessity of individual effort : Ἀγωνίζεσθε εἰσελθεῖν διὰ τῆς στενῆς πύλης, "Strive to enter in at the strait (or narrow) gate." They hold out no encouragement to the belief in national privileges, nor to the claims which have been put forth by particular branches of the Church of Christ, and more especially the Romish branch, to the exclusive favour of God, and an absolute security of salvation for all who die in external communion with the branch of the Church in question.

II. Our Lord did not altogether withhold an answer from His questioner. The words, "Many will seek to enter in, and shall not be able," convey by implication an answer to the inquiry, "Are there few that be saved?" For, although it might be argued, that out of so many millions many might be rejected, and still many be

chosen; yet the most obvious construction is, that many and few being both relative terms, and opposed to each other, that which we deny of the one, we assert of the other. It is, therefore, a fair conclusion to draw, that if *many* are lost, *few* comparatively are saved. But observe the order of our Lord's words. He does not put this statement in the van and forefront of His answer. Rather He draws attention to the primary importance of striving individually to enter in before concerning ourselves with the fate of others. His words represent the way of salvation as far from easy. Were it so, there would not be the same necessity for "agonizing" to enter in at the strait gate.

Let us inquire what are among the chief causes of the difficulty here implied and acknowledged by all who have striven in earnest to do their Lord's bidding.

One is, that in all ages, as in the present time, the universally received standard—the standard by which men in general live, falls far below the standard of the law of God. Those maxims, and that standard which the multitude follows and is conformed to, even under the more moral phases of society, are not those of the Evangelist; and there being but two ways spoken of, and no more, the way of the many is incompatible with salvation. The two paths may seem, at their beginnings, to be not far apart, but there is a gradual divergence; and followed to the end, the one will conduct to eternal life, the other to eternal death.

Now, when we apply the conclusions drawn from scripture to our own case, we cannot help acknowledging

that we have great reason for anxious questionings, for serious self-examination, whether the standard which *we* follow is that of the Gospel, or that of the society in which we live; whether it is that of the few, or that of the many; and whether, consequently, the way in which we are walking is the way of life, or the way of death.

Extending our view to the circle of our own immediate friends and associates, we cannot bear to think of any as destined to everlasting perdition; yet we cannot be blind to the danger of those who follow their own imaginations. Among the many of whom our Saviour speaks as seeking to enter in, whilst we cannot imagine any failing who seek in the appointed way, we cannot, consistently with our faith in Revelation, expect to see those included who treat the Gospel as foolishness, and hope to be saved by their own merits, or in virtue of some principles which they deduce from their own moral consciousness. Still more, when we contemplate another class, and picture to our minds the inevitable doom of those who do not even *seek* to be saved—when we call to mind the sentences of Scripture, and apply them to the case of those who are evidently and undisguisedly leading lives of carelessness and frivolity—we cannot resist the conclusion that if the words of Scripture be true, as we know they are, the souls of our brethren, or our own souls, as the case may be, are in great danger, from which nothing short of divine grace can extricate them.

Let me advert to another cause of difficulty, which is

very liable to stand in the way of those who, like you, are undergoing a course of preparation for the business of life.

In a community like this, we may thank God that a reverent attention is given to religious duties—that habits of outward order and decency are partly recommended, partly enforced; and that sin, in its bolder and more daring forms, is in a great degree kept in check. All this is well. Yet, even in this good—such is the imperfection of all earthly things—there lurks a danger, not the less malignant because not very apparent. There is the danger that we shall the more readily accept the standard of society—the society in which we live—as our rule, the closer resemblance it bears to the only true standard. There is the danger—and you are especially liable to it—that we shall rest satisfied with attaining a certain character among our associates; that when we have succeeded in coming up to all the requirements of the little world in which we live, or when later in life we have satisfied the conditions required by a fastidious, and in some respects a right-thinking age, we shall think we have done all, and suffer our consciences to be lulled by Satan into a fatal calm and false security. For in this way the tempter succeeds with the greater number. It is from the neutral ground, not given up entirely either to good or evil culture, that he gathers his most abundant harvest. It is from among the idlers and indifferent, who have not zeal enough to rank themselves on either side of the battle, that he recruits most successfully the ranks with which he will people the regions of the damned.

Let me ask you, What is the law which men habitually follow? Is it not, to a great extent, that of custom or habit? When we came into the world, we found certain established maxims already there; our fathers lived according to these maxims, and we have inherited them. Those who are accounted the most sensible people around us, live by them. "We cannot presume," the majority say, or live as if they said—"we cannot presume to set ourselves up as wiser or better than all the people about us; it is well to hold by what is generally approved and practised." Such is too much the language of our hearts; and we take no pains to inquire (by a comparison with the perfect law of God) whether the principles which guide the masses around us are really safe and sure guides; and thus we easily and gradually decline, till at length we only hold our place as Christians by the tie of a mere outward conformity, whilst all is cold and dead and dark within our hearts. Who were more outwardly religious, more zealous for the law of their fathers, more correct in their morality, than the chief priests, the Scribes, and Pharisees, when our Lord appeared on earth? And yet, what said Jesus? "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of God." Can language be stronger or more decisive than that?

Now I beseech you, brethren, to ask yourselves by what rule we shall be judged at the last day. Shall we be judged by that of custom, or of the opinions of

society? Will our neighbours' merits be the rule by which we shall be tried, and condemned, or acquitted? Nay; but by the Word, by the rule of God's commandments, we shall be judged in that awful day. Hear what our Lord saith, "He that rejecteth Me, hath One that judgeth him. The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at that day." The seer of Patmos, in his vision of that terrible day, saw "the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the Book of Life; and the dead were judged out of the things which were written in the books, according to their works." Can you, then, neglect that Book of Life, by which we shall all be judged? Oh! if we would but seek life now from the lips of Him who spake as never man spake, and who is still speaking to us by His Living Word, then would that book be to us, at the last day, the Book of Life indeed. But if we make it not our rule of life here, it will at that day contain our sentence of death.

Do you plead, "We do as others do"? For this very reason shall you be condemned. What says the Scripture about the way that leadeth to death? Is it not the way of the many?

You do as others do! For this very reason perished all who, in the days of Noah, were drowned by the waters of the deluge—in the days of Elijah, all who bowed the knee to Baal—in the days of Nebuchadnezzar, all who fell down before the image—in the time of Eleazar, all who forsook the law of God—in the last days of Jerusalem, all who cried, "Crucify

Him! Crucify Him!" With St. Augustine we may cry, "A curse upon thee, fatal torrent of human custom! Wilt thou never suspend thy course? Wilt thou, till the end of time, continue to drag the children of Adam down into the wide and terrible abyss?"

We have seen that conformity to the standard of the world around us is one great hindrance to our pursuing the narrow way; and that the standard of the many is not that of Scripture, and is, indeed, opposed to it, though it may bear an outward resemblance to it.

Another cause of the small number of those who choose the narrow way is that *that* which is required of us in order to our salvation is either ignored, or else rejected as being too hard for flesh and blood. If we would be saved, we must be ever swimming against the stream, not floating down with the current. We must be like men forcing their way through a great multitude which is hurrying in the opposite direction; we must be as wrestlers, or as those who run for a prize; throwing off all encumbrances, laying aside every weight. We must be ready to part with the most established habit or the most cherished idol of the soul, if the retaining it be incompatible with obedience to God's Word; ready to cut off the right hand or pluck out the right eye. Our life must be a continual mortifying of self, a constant warfare, and no light warfare—"for we wrestle not only with flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers," against the Prince of all Evil himself.

Ask yourselves, I beseech you, which of the two ways you have chosen. There are but two. You cannot

easily deceive yourselves as to the choice you have made, if you consider what is written of the straitness and difficulty of the right way. You cannot be tracking the narrow path which leads to life, without being conscious that you are doing so. It is impossible that a warrior should be engaged in a personal struggle without being aware of the wounds he gives and receives, of the thrusts and the parrying, of the heated blood, the sweating brow, the panting breath and the straining nerves, of the ardour of the conflict. No more is it possible for us to be living the lives of true Christians if we are not aware of any difficulties, of any conflict, of any effort, of any agonizing on our part. If all is tolerably smooth and easy with us, we have need to look to it that we be not following the smooth-beaten track with the multitude.

"The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." Have you ever used holy violence? Have you ever wrestled with God in prayer? Do you continue knocking until the gate is opened to you? Or are you fondly dreaming that you alone will be admitted into the kingdom of heaven without effort? You wish to be saved, doubtless; but what ground have you for flattering yourselves that after having lived with the multitude, you will be distinguished from them after death?

Oh! what a terrible antagonism there is in the human heart to the law of God and the ways of holiness! We know all this, which has been written for our learning, to be true; and yet we will not shake off the indifference

which lies upon our deadened hearts, like the stone which lay upon the tomb which closed round the dead Lazarus. I say, "we will not," for it is the will that is ever at fault. Do not sin so against God as to say "we cannot," for His blessed Spirit is ever ready to second the feeblest effort, the faintest desire after good. But a godly life, a life of painful, unceasing effort and self-denial, is too bitter, too hard, for human nature; we cannot bear the sacrifices it requires, blindly judging that the world's yoke is easier and pleasanter than Christ's. How many of us say in our hearts, though we may not acknowledge it, "Oh, that there were but an easier way to salvation! If it were but possible to enjoy in heaven a kingdom which was not the price of the travail of our soul!" How many feel a secret grudge against the teacher who represents the way of life such as it is! saying mentally, "Why do you tell us of a way so harsh, so disagreeable, so likely to discourage us in our weakness?"

My brethren, Eternal Wisdom knew that some men would refuse to be drawn and attracted, and that they must also be driven and impelled. Spiritual deadness is so universal and fatal a disease, men are so prone to suppose that all is well with them, and to speak peace to themselves when there is no peace, that no remedy would have availed but that which Eternal Goodness has provided. Only by hearing of the difficulty of the way, and of the travail of the soul through which they must pass before entering into rest, can they be aroused to a consciousness that their state is not such an one as

will lead to salvation, and that they are in reality perishing.

"The things that are seen are temporal, and the things that are not seen are eternal;" and an universal blindness has fallen upon the sons of Adam, so that unless their sight be supernaturally restored, they cannot see the things that are eternal; they see only the things that are temporal, and even these not in the true light of their relative nature. We need, all of us, to pray with blind Bartimæus—"Lord! that I may receive my sight;" for He who restored sight to the blind can alone restore to us our spiritual vision.

Those who have seriously set about the work of their salvation will not be discouraged by what is written of the straitness of the way. For the Word of God abounds with encouraging and precious promises, and invitations to all such as truly seek Him, not in a careless and indolent manner, like those who sought to be admitted into heaven on the ground of having eaten and drunk in the presence of their Lord, but with their whole heart, with the undivided energy of their awakened soul.

And experience will teach them that the way becomes easier and pleasanter the farther it is pursued. The first steps are the hardest. Compared with the world's service, Christ's service is perfect freedom. Compared with the world's yoke, Christ's yoke is easy and light. It is to those who harden themselves and turn away, and to the languid and hesitating, that the way is painful and uninviting. True, to the end it is a narrow

way; to the end there is a cross to bear, a conflict to maintain. But to the faithful, the end becomes ever brighter and more to be desired; and the soul deliberately chooses "rather to endure affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;" for it has "regard unto the recompense of the reward." There is such an ever increasing thirst after the living God, such an awakened perception of the joy to be inherited, the glory to be attained, that present pain is despised, and the soul in travail bows with a courageous constancy under the anguish that it has to endure, in hope of the time so near when it shall remember no more its sorrow. The sufferings of the present time are accounted "not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."

In conclusion, I beseech you, for the love of God, to think on these things *now*. "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Each time that you are exhorted in this place, it is to you as a call from God; for God's ministers speak to you in His name. They are bound to care for your souls; to inquire "Are you in the way of salvation?" They and you will alike appear before God at the day of judgment; and woe to the minister, on that day, who shall have failed to warn you faithfully! and woe to all those to whom the warning shall have been given in vain! To the end that the words now spoken may not be ineffectual, may God grant us His Holy Spirit.

XIV.

FAMILIARITY WITH RELIGION NO TITLE TO SALVATION.

"*When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; and He shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: Then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets. But He shall say, I tell you, I know you not whence ye are; depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrust out. And they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God. And, behold, there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last.*"—LUKE XIII. 25—30.

THE words which you have just heard, form a sequel to those in which our Lord exhorted all who would be saved to enter in at the strait gate. You may remember that on a recent occasion I endeavoured to bring that exhortation before you, and to point out to you the necessity of earnest striving, and constant individual effort, to detach ourselves from the path of the *many*, which leads to destruction, and to choose and keep to the path of the *few*, which leads to life eternal.

Since that occasion, Christianity has been brought before you in its social aspect; and you have been led to entertain thoughts regarding the spiritual welfare of the millions who are either wholly, or in great measure,

ignorant of the Gospel. You have been recently invited to show by your deeds that you take an interest in the missionary cause. And you have responded to that invitation, I trust, with sincerity, and not as a matter of form; but with a genuine wish to promote the salvation of souls, and to testify your earnest desire that the kingdom of Christ, for the coming of which you daily pray, may be established on earth.

Such an aspect of Christianity, and such objects as those which the Church Missionary Society has in view, do not in the least degree interfere with the individual aspect of religion, which every one who regards his own salvation must keep before him. On the contrary, the religion which centres in itself, resembles a tree lopped of its branches, and only drawing nutriment from the earth; whereas, the religion which, beginning at home, extends itself abroad, is like the tree which sends forth branches towards every quarter of the heavens, and draws nourishment from the air, inhaling gases which promote vegetable life, drinking in moisture which supplies the trunk with sap, and courting with its outspread leaves the vivifying action of the sun. Such a development of religion as tends outwards is found to conduce to inward strength; like an ancient monarchy reviving in its colonial possessions, or an aged warrior living over again in the deeds of his son. "He that watereth," it is written, "shall himself be watered."

The subject which the text brings before us is this: that familiarity with religion constitutes no title to salvation.

I propose first to draw your attention to the points

in the narrative in the order in which they present themselves.

I. It is to be observed that an impression prevailed in the minds of those who stood without and knocked, that they had a claim to be admitted.

Now what did this claim rest upon?

The answer is given in their own words:—

a. We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and

b. Thou hast taught in our streets.

This was true in the primary sense of the words as applied to the Jews. Jesus had eaten and drunk in the presence of many of His own countrymen, and they in His; and He had taught in their streets and in their synagogues. After this, it is not to be wondered at that the Jews should put forth a claim to personal recognition by Jesus.

Likewise, all members of Christ's Church may be considered as represented by those who have "eaten and drunk in Christ's presence," and in whose streets He has taught.

For the Gospel has been preached in their ears, if not in the streets, yet in the House of Prayer, in the place more peculiarly set apart for public worship; and many have responded to the invitation to eat and drink of Christ's spiritual body and blood, not only where He is present to the believer at the Sacrament of the Last Supper, but where His words are eagerly drunk in and incorporated into the spiritual system.

You, whom I am addressing, are in an especial manner represented by those who would plead familiarity

with religion as a title to admission into the kingdom of heaven. The religious advantages which you possess are such as no school or college, a few years ago, possessed. It is within the remembrance of the older members of this congregation, when the first school chapel, with sermons especially addressed to the boys, was opened at one of the chief of our public schools. Here, whatever good the younger members of a mixed congregation could derive under the old parochial system is retained; whilst for them, almost exclusively, are superadded the benefits of more direct teaching, and more specific exhortation. This chapel, therefore, is something more than a house of prayer; it is a house of religious instruction and admonition: the appointed sphere for the exercise of ministerial functions at once faithful, scriptural, earnest, and affectionate; calculated no less to attract and influence, than to inform and teach; and as such, it must, I am convinced, be indelibly impressed upon your memory long after your connexion with this place has ceased. These are important privileges. In their degree they are analogous to those of which the text speaks. And the application which we are justified in making is, that *living in a place where religious truths are taught, is not religion.* We may go a step farther, and say, that *living among those who practise religion, is not religion,* any more than sitting next to a boy in school who learns his lesson, is the same thing as learning it.

Religion is no more a joint-stock concern than the culture of the mind is.

You may grow up to be what is called very good Churchmen; that is, you may be very regular in the outward observances of religious worship, and may conform to the ordinances of the Church of England, but at the same time you may be very indifferent Christians; that is, very little penetrated by the love of Christ, very slow of heart to believe all that the Bible tells you of Him, and very little under the influence of the Holy Spirit. Thus, although you may not be notorious evil-doers, yet you may not have found the way of salvation.

II. The next point to be noted in the narrative is, Christ's displeasure with those who stood without, and its cause.

a. He would not know them, although they professed a knowledge of Him.

If no reason were assigned for this, we might be at a loss to understand this portion of the Divine economy. For it seems inconsistent with the assurance, "Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out." But when the reason is stated, all is clear. It is written, "Let him that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity," and so in our text we find the cause of Christ's displeasure assigned;

b. that they were "workers of iniquity." Now, a very little consideration should suffice to make it clear to us, that before any can be admitted into the presence of the living God, they must be purged through Christ from all iniquity. For to what fellowship can a pure and holy God admit the souls of mortal men polluted by sin? Whatever may be their desire to be received into

everlasting joy; how great soever may be their confidence; the workers of wickedness must depart from the presence of the Lord.

III. Great must be the pain which the conscious soul will endure, against which the doors of mercy shall be for ever closed; great the sense of deprivation—of severance from that living Presence at whose right hand there are pleasures for evermore. And the text suggests to us how the extent of misery will be aggravated by the contrast of beholding others in the enjoyment of happiness, and of seeing some, of whom the rejected candidates for the heavenly prize never heard, outstrip them in the race.[1]

IV. And the general conclusion which follows is, that "there are last which shall be first, and there are first which shall be last;" *i.e.* the possessors of less privileges shall get the start of those who possess greater.

And so it must be. Religion is a thing of the heart, and not of the lips. It is not the exclusive property of a class, but an inheritance open to all who have faith in Christ, and who repent of their sins, and who seek by prayer forgiveness of their sins, and the cleansing application of the blood of Jesus, and the gift of the Holy Spirit, by which alone their affections may be changed, and the fruits of a true conversion may exhibit themselves in their lives.

The change must begin from within. The development must be *intensive* before it assumes an *extensive* form. It is of no use to clothe ourselves in borrowed

[1] v. 28, 29.

plumes. It will not avail us to adopt the language of a sect—to deal in their peculiar phraseology—to speak of our fellow-sinners as converted and unconverted, as if the secrets of all hearts were open to us. Whatever shibboleth we adopt, it will avail us nothing—absolutely nothing—if we have not God's unseen stamp upon us: *then* we are God's saints; and the Lord, who knoweth them that are His, will not cast us out of His heavenly kingdom.

There are a few signs by which we know men of shallow intellect from men of deep thought. One is, that they are perpetually talking about persons, instead of things. Personality sharpens anecdote, but interferes with all real inquiry into the nature of things. So it is in religion. People who avoid all conversation about the great realities of spiritual life, but who delight in canvassing the merits of such and such a preacher, or such and such a writer, are, for the most part, shallow Christians.

What a contrast to these may be observed in men of really great minds, or of high spiritual attainments! How they avoid the personalities and the accidents of a question; and get to its abstract truth, to its very pith and marrow! What a contrast there was between the course taken by our Lord, and that suggested by His questioners! Avoiding the somewhat curious and personal question, "Are there few that be saved?" He takes occasion to teach a great truth—that whether few or many shall be saved, *none* shall succeed in obtaining salvation but such as *strive*.

This is, in fact, the sum of the whole matter—the answer to the question, "What shall *I do* to obtain eternal life?" Strive! Agonize! Be not daunted by difficulties. Strive the more. There is a class of persons who are represented by the slothful servant. They see the difficulties before them, and they give up the attempt in disgust. The sentence pronounced against *him* is one which *they* must expect. It is a dreadful one. Dreadful is it to think that many with whom we are living—eating and drinking—listening to the message of salvation—transacting the daily business of life—may be like those who stood without, and were refused entrance.

Yet there is encouragement, as well as warning, in our Lord's words, "*Strive* to enter in." He does not say many who *strive* shall not succeed; but many shall *seek* to enter in, and shall not be able.

The question naturally suggests itself, How do men seek to enter in? An answer to this will disabuse our minds of all doubt as to the justice of the Divine economy, which excludes so many from the joys of heaven.

Men seek to enter into the kingdom of heaven as they seek to get on in life—hoping that good fortune may supply the place of resolute endeavour and self-denial; neither giving to their worldly business the best of their time, nor their undivided energies; attending, perhaps, more to their own pleasures and enjoyments than to the greater ends of existence. We see many men ruined by self-indulgence, and many

Christians wrecked by carelessness, for want of energetic striving.

Or perhaps they think to be saved by the merits of their Redeemer, from the mere fact of Christ having died to save them. This is a vain hope. Christ endured agony in the garden for sinful man. He requires those whom He has redeemed to *agonize* heavenward.

Or haply, they rest in the assurance that Christ's promises to the Church embrace them also, as faithful members of the same. If they have walked in dutiful obedience to the law of God; if the fruits of faith and love have manifested themselves in their lives; then they have shown that their heart is right with God; and as they have shown their love to Him, they will be embraced in the arms of His love, and received into the joy of their Lord. But if otherwise, they will assuredly hear a sentence like that, "Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity."

Perhaps they may have sneered and scoffed at "the saints" in life, at those who have not shrunk from confessing Christ before men. These they must be prepared to see preferred before them. Aye, and even those upon whom they looked as the dregs of society; those for whose welfare they strove, perhaps, in their indolent manner, paying a small annual subscription to this charitable institution, and subscribing to that immediate call; some of the homeless and houseless; some of those who were the reverse of respectable; who were immeasurably below them in the social scale—

these will be taken in before them. "There are last that shall be first, and the first last."

O, let me appeal to you who are young—who have not yet been drawn into the world's vortex—whose thoughts are not yet dyed deep with conventionality, and who have a field open before you, in which, by the grace of God, you may be enabled to do the work of Christ. *Agonize* to enter into the kingdom of heaven; not merely that you may escape hell, nor even that you may win heaven—though "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive the joys" which God has prepared for His loving and faithful servants in the world to come; but strive, because Christ has agonized before you; because He has striven against wickedness, and cruelty, and injustice; because He has warred against selfishness, and indolence, and sensuality; because He has endured the cross and despised the shame, that we might be conquerors like Him.

Here is an object worthy of your highest ambition. Strive to show that you value the privilege of treading in your heavenly Master's steps. In such a case, imitation is more glorious than originality in any other.

Show your love to Jesus and your faith in God by your earnestness and resolute endeavours to realize personally all that you may read in Scripture about the happiness of true believers, and their love of God's law.

Strive to test the value of the franchise given you. You were made at your baptism a citizen of God's

spiritual kingdom. Many of you—some very recently—have asserted your rights, have *registered* yourselves, so to speak. Now, when you are called upon to elect what master you will serve, God or Baal—to choose between the service of Christ, and the service of devils—do you hang back, and speculate: "Are there few that shall be saved?"—just like an idle boy, who asks, "Is not Thucydides a very hard book?" not with any idea of grappling with its difficulties, but as an excuse for avoiding all exertion.

Now, before habits of sloth and procrastination, or of dreamy speculation, have become inveterate, and while you are full of life, and hope, and promise, declare yourself at once on the side of God. This is to be on the side of progress, of religious advance; for you cannot stand still.

You are entered for a race. Here is your training-ground, the world is your course, eternal joys your promised reward.

What will you do? Look on, and see how others run? That will not aid you or them. What *must* you do? Do what Jesus bids you. Strive to enter into the strait gate; assuring yourselves, that it is only to the courageous, to the persevering, to the energetic in spiritual matters, that an abundant entrance will be ministered into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

XV.

THE ASCENSION.

"*Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven.*"—ACTS I. 11.

SUCH were the words addressed to the eleven, as they sought in vain to penetrate with their eyes the veil which concealed their Lord and Master from them. Well might they gaze up into heaven; for they knew not that He, whose power had been manifested over the grave and gate of death, might not also unbar the portals of heaven, and stand revealed in all the glory which He had with the Father before the world was made.

Their minds were so preoccupied by visions of a worldly kingdom, that the last question which they asked Jesus before He was taken up was, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" So completely had they forgotten those memorable words, "My kingdom is not of this world!"

It was therefore needful that they should be recalled from the thoughts of what never could be, to the expectation of that which, in God's good time, would surely come. "This same Jesus, which is taken up

from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

It is often felt, by those who mourn for the loss of earthly friends, that a voice which summons them from the grave is a voice of mercy. Even if it bid them return to the routine of everyday life, it is better than that they should linger about the scenes which once were gladdened by a presence which shall never cross them again: but if it whisper to them that what they see is unreal and fleeting; that what they loved, the spirit of him or her for whom they mourn has a real existence, and will live for ever in communion with other spirits; and moreover, that they themselves may at no distant period be partakers of the same life, the same immortality; it is indeed a voice sent from the Father of spirits, bearing a welcome message to the heirs of salvation.

Who would be deaf to such a call? Not the Apostles when addressed by the messengers of God. "They returned unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a Sabbath-day's journey."

There are some places which were favoured by a double portion of the Divine presence of our Lord during His sojourn upon earth. Such was Capernaum on the Lake Tiberias. Such also was Bethany. It was the abode of Mary and her sister Martha. It was the scene of the most striking of all Christ's miracles—the raising of Lazarus from the dead.

Bethany, now called El Azarieh, is a desolate village, consisting of some thirty or forty houses.

Three roads lead to it from Jerusalem. The southern one runs along the south-eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, between it and the Mount of Offence, so called from the idolatrous worship of the Moabites, which, according to a tradition of the twelfth century, was celebrated in the time of Solomon on that mountain.

On the left of this road rises the highest of three summits of the Mount of Olives, on which stands the Church of the Ascension, said to have been built by the Empress Helena, but restored, in its present form, by the Armenian Christians. This is the spot where tradition says our Lord set foot on earth for the last time.

Now, although such special traditions as are connected with certain localities are of no importance in a religious point of view, yet we cannot help regarding with interest the events in the life of Christ, which were deemed worthy of record by the sacred historian. It is a natural result of the feeling of personal attachment to our blessed Lord, that we should strive to realize, as far as may be, the daily life of Christ on earth, and that we should read with undying interest all that Jesus did and said, with whom He lived, and towards whom He exhibited those marks of affection which endear the intercourse of daily life.

Much of this interest is centred around Bethany. Thither, in all probability, Jesus retired every evening during the Feast weeks, after He had spent the day in discoursing, and in teaching in the Temple. The house of Martha and Mary was sanctified by the human affection of the Son of God, and its neighbourhood

baptized by His tears; and it was from no distant spot that Christ ascended, leaving the sound of His blessing behind him. Doubtless, they who were with Him at that time often revisited the spot where their Lord was parted from them, and where they had gazed upon His lessening form till the clouds of heaven received Him. Doubtless, after they had received the gift of the Holy Ghost, and were cheered by the presence of that Comforter who was to bring all things to their remembrance, they retained a vivid recollection of that last scene and those last words. Think of the delight which awaited them when, with new-born powers of perception and of recollection, they called to mind all that had been predicted of their Lord's ascension and of His coming again! They would now see the full force of the Psalmist's prophecy, "Thou hast ascended up on high, Thou hast led captivity captive,"[1] and they would acknowledge that a greater than Elias[2] was come—come in a higher and holier sense than their understandings had yet been able to comprehend; come to declare not only the majesty, but the mercy of God; come to redeem the world from the curse of sin; come to bear the iniquities of His people, who Himself knew no iniquity; come to endure the pains of death that all men might live through Him; come to obtain a victory over the grave, whereof all should be partakers; come to re-assure His disciples of His divine power and truth

[1] Ps. lxviii. 18.

[2] Bishop Pearson on the Creed, Art. vi., speaks of Elijah as a type of Christ in respect only of his ascension.

by His presence with them for forty days after His resurrection, and by the manner of His departure from them as He ascended in visible form into the clouds of heaven, not borne aloft in a fiery chariot, but welcomed by twenty thousand chariots of God, even thousands of angels. All these things would be brought before their minds; and when their Lord and Master was no longer present with them, when their eyes could no longer behold Him, they would strive to follow Him "with the wings of their meditations and the chariots of their affections."[1] They would confidently await the realization of the promise of the Holy Ghost, and look for a double portion of the Spirit being bestowed upon them, from the knowledge that He who was ascended up had received gifts, not for Himself alone, nor for angels, but for men.

Whether we view the ascension of our Blessed Lord as a manifestation of Divine power, or as a confirmation of faith, it was of paramount importance to the Apostles; it is of paramount importance to us.

It furnished them with the most evident, the most undeniable proof of our Lord's divinity. Enoch and Elijah had been taken up to heaven. Christ ascended of Himself. They had received abundant proof of His resurrection; but they had not been permitted to witness it. Of the ascension they were all witnesses. Christ was taken up from among them, "as He blessed them." His departure from them was not unexpected. He had told them that it must take place before they should receive

[1] Pearson on the Creed, i. 322. 3d Edit. Oxford.

the Comforter—"If I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you."[1] It is not for us to pry into the Divine economy, or seek too curiously to scan it; otherwise we should say that the "second advocate could not officiate on earth till the first advocate had entered upon His office in heaven."[2]

No doubt the Apostles, who dearly loved their Master, thought it an immense price to pay—the loss of their Divine Teacher and Friend on earth—for the gift of the Spirit which should descend upon them from heaven; but consider for a moment the important results to them and to all mankind. Not till the Holy Ghost had come to guide them into all truth could the Apostles go forth as infallible witnesses inspired by God to preach the Gospel to every creature. And without the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, what would be our faith, our desire after God, our power to comprehend and hold fast the truth as it is in Christ?

So, then, without the gift of the Holy Ghost neither could the Apostles have preached the word aright, nor mankind have received it.

But Christ's ascension does not depend upon any other event for its importance. It is the ground and glory of our faith, "and hence we have our hope as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast."[3] "We could not expect that dust and ashes should ascend the heavens; but since our nature hath gone before in Him, we can now hope to follow after Him."[4]

[1] John xvi. 7. [2] Pearson on the Creed. [3] Heb. vi. 19. [4] Pearson.

He is our Head, the Head of His Church; and where the head is, there the members may hope to find admission. Let us, then, purify our members that are on the earth, lest, when so great blessings are in store for us, we be cast away as unworthy to receive them.

The profession of faith in Christ ascended is necessary for the exalting of our affections. "For where our treasure is, there will our heart be also." "If I be lifted up from the earth," said Jesus, "I will draw all men to me." And if this was said with special reference to His crucifixion, it applies no less to His ascension. Christ ascended into heaven, and sitting on the right hand of God, is the pole-star of the believer's hopes. To Him the Christian's mental aspirations and spiritual longings naturally turn. When we raise our thoughts to Him, we feel that we are strangers and pilgrims here on earth, and that another country belongs to us, of which Christ is King.

No mind can measure the extent of that blessed region which the divine glory fills. "In my Father's house," said Jesus, "are many mansions. I go, that I may prepare a place for you." These words were addressed to the Apostles, but they were written also for *our* comfort, upon whom the ends of the world are come.

When Christ offered Himself up as the first-fruits, the offering was accepted, and all human nature was sacrificed thereby. However abundant may be the harvest —gathered from the east and west and north and south —it will find acceptance through the offering of Christ.

Here is matter for encouragement to all those who

are moved by God's Holy Spirit to go forth as labourers into the field. Some of those who now hear me may, in a few years, be called to labour in the Lord's vineyard, having received their credentials as ambassadors from the King of kings to His rightful subjects. What an encouragement to you, amid the failures which you are sure to experience whenever you try to raise the fallen nature of man to its divine original, to think of the finished work of Christ—to contemplate Him not only as our sacrifice, not only as our example, but as the restorer of fallen humanity, as the accomplisher of that transformation which man would labour vainly to effect, that by which the earth-bound spirit is rendered capable of immortal bliss. And not only the ministers of Christ, but all, should remember the extent, the importance of the work to be done, and the irrevocable nature of time and opportunities for doing the will of God, which will is, that none should perish, but that all should be saved. What says the Word of God? "He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth." Therefore, let each one who has the words of Christ at heart, and who loves the brethren, strive not only to enter into the heavenly garner, but to bring with him his sheaves—that is, the souls of those towards whose conversion he has been made instrumental.

Let no one think that because he is young, or because he is not called to the ministry, he has no title to call upon others, or seek to influence their minds, and draw them to the service of God. Many a minister of the

Gospel would be thankful if he were placed in such a favourable position for influencing others as some of you are placed in. Many parents would be glad to relinquish their parental authority for a time if they could enlist their children's sympathies in the way that their elder schoolfellows, those that are the leaders of opinion in this little world, are able to enlist them. If this be true, O bethink yourselves of the responsibility which rests upon you! No talent is bestowed upon us by God without its responsibility. Consciously or unconsciously, you are in the possession of talents which ought to be improved in the improvement of the society around you, *now* of your schoolfellows, *presently*, it may be, of your comrades in arms, or of your brother students at the University. Oh, pray for enlightenment, that you may see and acknowledge the subtle influences of mind upon mind, and temper upon temper, which flow to you, and from you. Pray that you may be more earnest about the work of God yourselves, and that, as a proof of your earnestness, you may be stirred up to exert yourselves for others. Shrink not from speaking a word in season to your erring or wavering companion. If it comes into your heart to do so, it was God's Spirit that put it there. Oh, quench not the Spirit! Strive to labour as a fellow-worker with the professed servants of the Lord, and depend upon it you will be rewarded, if not by beholding the immediate fruits of your exertions in the conversion of others, yet assuredly in that peace of mind which results from the conscious fulfilment of a duty, and in the thought that you have not only

prayed, but striven, for the coming of Christ's kingdom, and for His glorification in the hearts of men.

The ascension of our Lord was only one part of the scene to which our thoughts have been directed.

As the eleven stood, as it were, spell-bound to the place where Jesus had left them, two men in white raiment stood by, which said: "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

And what was to be the purpose of His coming?

They needed not that any man or angel should tell them that. Enoch, the seventh from Adam, had prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints to execute judgment upon all."[1] Daniel, in a vision of the night, "beheld one like the Son of Man come with the clouds of heaven, and He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve Him."[2]

The Jews, therefore, knew that there would be a final day of judgment, and that the Son of Man would reign as a king for ever.

To the Apostles this had been distinctly told by their Master: "For the Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He shall reward every man according to his works."[3] On another occasion Jesus had told them of His second

[1] Jude 14, 15. [2] Dan. vii. 13, 14. [3] Matt. xvi. 27.

coming, with special reference to themselves: "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also."[1]

These words point to a different coming to that which our Lord frequently spoke of, when He should come to execute vengeance upon the city of Jerusalem. They bid us look forward to a time when all things shall be accomplished, "for Him must the heavens receive until the restitution of all things."[2] "Then shall the Lord Himself descend from heaven with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God."[3] And He who was falsely judged by His chosen race shall judge all nations with a righteous judgment; and He shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other; and they shall appear before His throne. And not only they, but also the ungodly and the sinner, shall be summoned before that dread tribunal. For the graves shall be opened, and the sea shall give up her dead, and all shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may "receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."[4]

"Then shall the knowledge and wisdom of Christ be shown by His opening all secrets, revealing all actions, discerning all inclinations; His justice in condemning sinners; His mercy in absolving believers; His power in the execution of His sentence."[5]

[1] John xiv. 3. [2] Acts iii. 21. [3] Thess. iv. 16. [4] 2 Cor. v. 10.
[5] Pearson on the Creed.

In that day the men of Galilee, who gave up all, and followed Jesus, shall sit upon thrones, judging the tribes of Israel. Then shall they be witnesses of the truth, and shall convict them to whom the Gospel was preached in vain, and those who have read the Gospel in vain. And the Great Judge of all shall separate the evil from the good, as a shepherd divideth the goats from the sheep; and the sentence shall go forth, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

We stand midway between two awful manifestations, the ascent to glory, and the descent to judgment. And if that descent were only to usher in the dawn of a day of vengeance, "who might abide the day of His coming, and who could stand when He appeareth?"

But, blessed be God, the knowledge that Jesus, who shall be our Judge, is none other than Jesus, who gave His life for us, is a guarantee that in heaven mercy is united to justice. To those who have received the Gospel, who have walked in the fear of God, and have kept fast the faith in Christ crucified—neither forsaking the assembling of themselves together in public worship, nor the habit of private prayer; neither the celebration of the blessed Sacrament to which you are invited to-day, nor that spiritual feeding on the Body and Blood of Christ, which is implied in reading and inwardly digesting His Holy Word—to them the coming of the Son of Man shall not be attended with such awful terrors. In proportion as they have loved Him when on earth will they fear the less when He cometh with

ten thousands of His angels. For them another sentence is in store : "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And, in the hope of hearing those gracious words, they that have put on Christ, and have been renewed in love by the Holy Ghost, will say with the seer of Patmos, "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!"

[*Sunday after Ascension*, 1859.]

XVI.

WISDOM THE GIFT OF GOD.

"*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering.*"—JAMES I. 5, 6.

AMONG the different marks which enable us to distinguish between the servants of God and the servants of the world, there is one which never fails. God's servants look up to Him for the supply of every good thing; the servants of the world rely upon themselves, or upon their friends. If they need counsel, they generally have recourse to those men who have a character for shrewdness, and knowledge of the world. On an abstract question they go to books. On practical matters they refer to their own experience, and seek to corroborate this by the experience of others. If these fail, they endeavour to meet the exigencies of the case, regard being had to what the world will say of their conduct. To a higher tribunal they seldom refer their actions. God enters not into their deliberations: He is not in all their thoughts.

It is not so with the children of God. They habitually refer to Him in all their concerns. They do not make an arbitrary distinction between sacred and

profane things, excluding God from all participation in the latter; but looking upon Him as "the Giver of every good and perfect gift," of whatever kind it be, they make all their wants known to Him.

This relation of the human family to God in one particular is set forth in the text: "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God." What a condition of dependence does this suggest! What direct communion with the Father of spirits! What undoubting confidence! And on the part of our Father which is in heaven, what free grace and bounty! What readiness to supply our wants! What a lively interest in the welfare of His children? The Apostle does not say, "If any of you need any small gift," but "if any of you lack *wisdom*."

Wisdom, in its ordinary sense, is that prudence and discretion which enables men to perceive what is to be done according to the time, place, and persons, and by which we exercise a due control over our judgment and affections. Knowledge is said to be power, and there are few gifts that men covet more than power; but without wisdom knowledge is of little use. Knowledge directs a man as to what is to be done, and what is not to be done; but wisdom directs him how to do things duly, conveniently, and fitly. This was the gift which King Solomon asked of the Lord on Gibeon, even "a wise and understanding heart," that he might judge His people. No greater gift could be bestowed on a ruler; nor, indeed, can a greater earthly gift be sought by any one than "a wise and under-

standing heart," such as may enable him to know what is to be done in every emergency of life, and how to do it. How many calamities befall nations and individuals from the want of wisdom! Into what straits and difficulties do rash and inconsiderate counsels bring a people and their rulers! What distresses come upon families from the want of wisdom and prudence on the part of those who bear rule in the house! What sorrow and shame does reckless folly in youth, or ill-advised ambition in manhood, or levity in old age, bring upon individuals! The gift of earthly wisdom, then, is no small matter. It is no common possession, although many lay claim to it. There are spurious imitations of wisdom with which the world is deceived. These are plentiful enough; but true wisdom in its lower phase is not often found, still less that *higher wisdom,* which David speaks of in the 90th Psalm, "So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom;" and of which we read in the Book of Job,[1] "The fear of the Lord, *that* is wisdom." The Apostle James asks,[2] "Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you?" My brethren, if the Apostle were present among us, and asked *us* this question, who would venture to say, "Lo, here am I; *I* have wisdom and knowledge?"

Among what classes of men are we to find such wisdom? Among the thinkers and philosophers? Why, the very word "philosophy" contains an acknowledgment that the wisest men are only seekers of wisdom.

[1] xxviii. 28 [2] iii. 13.

And if the ancients confessed this of the wisdom which they sought—if the wisest of them declared, that the only claim that he could make to greater wisdom than other men possessed was, that he alone knew his own ignorance—how much more must we confess it of "the wisdom that is from above," of which St. James speaks in another passage, of that "hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: which none of the princes of this world knew;" of which St. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, applying the words of ancient prophecy, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Of this heavenly wisdom the wise man wrote, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before His works of old."[1] In Him is all wisdom: and he that would seek wisdom must seek the Lord.

There is one especial way in which God has manifested His wisdom. Before wisdom dwelt with men in the person of Jesus Christ, we are told that "the Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens:" and when we read in the opening of St. John's Gospel of the Divine Word—"All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made"—we conclude, that the Incarnate Word, which dwelt among us, even Jesus, was present at the creation of the world, ordering all things, informing all things—the source of all the beauty and harmony which we behold; and that He, too, gave

[1] Prov. viii. 22.

and gives to them that receive Him, "power to become the sons of God, even to those who believe on His name." He it is who inspires those who seek Him, by His Holy Spirit; and through Him they who are poor in mental gifts may become wise unto salvation.

Now it follows, from what has been said, that all men "lack wisdom" in the highest sense; for no one has attained to that measure of wisdom which Jesus Christ displayed. Yet human nature, since Christ has enlarged its capacities, is capable, to an infinite degree, of receiving the in-pourings of wisdom from on high, if not with reference to earthly things, which are limited by conditions of time and space, at all events with reference to heavenly things, which God can at any time display to the believing soul as He did to the Evangelist in the isle of Patmos, by drawing the veil that separates heaven from mortal eyes, and revealing to the eye of faith the secrets of the world to come. Hence we may supply to the Apostle's words, "If any man lack wisdom," *as we all do,* "let him ask of God." We are to *ask*, dear brethren, because God commands us to do so. It is not because He knows not what we stand in need of, but because He would have us acknowledge our dependence on Him, and bring our minds into that state in which they are most fitly made recipients of His divine gifts. It is God's good pleasure that we should ask, and He is pleased thereby. Thus, when Solomon asked the Lord to give him a wise and understanding heart, we read that the thing which Solomon asked "pleased the Lord," and He added to him also length of days and wealth.

How forcibly does the Apostle encourage us to ask of God. "He giveth to all men *liberally*," he says. In the Almighty is no parsimony. There is no stint of His bounty. He doth not dole out a miserable pittance, complaining of His diminished store, or asking a price for it. He gives as a king, royally, freely, largely. Again, He doth not upbraid any with His generosity—magnifying His gift at the expense of the receiver, as ungenerous men are wont to do: "He giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." What? to *all* men! To him who never sought Him before? To the child, who has but just past the age of unconscious infancy? To the schoolboy, whose conduct is, in many cases, so far removed from ordinary prudence and good sense? To the careless, whose minds have been occupied with the follies of the world? To the hard-working labourer, or artizan, or man of business, who perhaps have shown themselves wise in their generation, but who, resting in this, and not sanctifying their toil by earnest prayer, nor seeking the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, have never sought the true wisdom.

Yes, dear brethren, the Apostle tells us "He giveth *to all men*," not unconditionally as to the state of the receiver's heart and mind, but without any limitation of persons. God forbid that any tongue should gainsay such princely munificence, or seek to limit it by our notions of deserving, or of possibility, or likelihood. "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, and it shall be given him."

If *asking* is the only condition on which so great a

blessing is made to depend, it is surely an important question for us, *How* are we to ask?

First, by what *means* must we ask? There is one means by which we are able to draw nigh to God at all times, my brethren, and that is *prayer*. To say that *asking* of God means *praying to* God, seems a truism. But there is something in the attitude and spirit of prayer which hallows all our requests. To ask in Christ's Name; to ask in submission to the will of God; to ask, because Christ commands us, saying, "Ask, and ye shall receive;" to ask that God's name may be glorified—this is, in fact, to pray to God, and to pray in the manner which Holy Scripture tells us will be most efficacious.

Secondly, in what frame of mind are we to ask? This is an important matter, about which the Apostle does not suffer us to remain uncertain. "Let him ask *in faith*," he says, "nothing wavering."

This is the requisite condition of those mighty works which the Spirit of God, whose descent upon the Apostles we this day commemorate, is ready to accomplish in our souls, works no less stupendous than those which His blessed Son wrought on earth. For what work, that concerns us, can be greater than that a human soul should be brought from death to life; from darkness to light; from the ways of sin to the ways of holiness?

If we ask "Why is faith necessary as a condition of our prayers finding acceptance with God?" we can be at no loss for an answer. Unbelieving prayers are a

mockery of God. Wavering prayers imply a doubt that God hears prayer, or that He has power to grant our petitions. On these two points, what says the Scripture? "He that hath planted the ear, shall He not hear?"[1] He who is "able to do abundantly above all that we can ask or think,"[2] and who would have all men saved, and brought to a knowledge of the truth—who has said by the mouth of His blessed Son, "Ask, and it shall be given you,"[3] shall not He hearken to the prayers of His faithful people? And shall He not fulfil all their petitions? Doubtless, He will both hear and answer them. Therefore, "he that wavereth" either knows not, or heeds not the assurances of God set forth in His holy Scriptures. His will is not yet brought into submission to the Divine will: such an one cannot be partaker of the wisdom that is from above. If we are truly wise, the spirit of wisdom must dwell in us, and guide our affections, as well as direct our understanding and judgment.

In any given case we may rely on it, that *that* course will be our truest wisdom, which is most in accordance with the will of God. Hence, if we begin by asking God to show His will to us, or to direct us in the study of His word, to the knowledge of His will, we shall be on the way to the attainment of wisdom. Perhaps we may be entirely in darkness as to the way in which God would have us act. This is the province of faith. When we can no longer walk by sight, we may perhaps be able to advance on our way—clinging

[1] Ps. xciv. 9. [2] Eph. iii. 20. [3] Matt. vii. 7.

to the hand of our heavenly Father, in humble confidence that He is able to guide us in the way we should walk. Here is no ground for wavering. If we turn to God's promises, and compare them with what He has done in the times of old—aye, and what He is doing in our time—we shall see that His faithfulness and truth are beyond all doubt. Hence we may commit our way unto the Lord, with entire confidence that He will direct our steps; that He will enable us to see things in their true light, and in their just relations to each other, and so to exercise a right judgment in all things. And this dependence on God should not only mark our first endeavour after wisdom, but should accompany us to the end. Our prayers should never be relaxed; for we need the continual supply of wisdom, as of other heavenly gifts and graces. Otherwise, we shall be in danger of falling away like Solomon, who corrupted his Divine and glorious gift by idolatry; or, like the restorer of modern science, we may bring into contempt the highest gifts of intellect, and an intuitive wisdom scarcely ever equalled, by treasonable and fraudulent practices. Looking at such examples, we shall do well to pray not only for the gifts of the Spirit, but for His continual and abiding presence, that we may use those gifts to the glory of God, and the good of mankind.

There is one characteristic of true wisdom, on which the Apostle dwells at some length in the third chapter, namely, government of the tongue. Few of us are in the habit of exercising so constant a control over the tongue as the Apostle would have us. Few can resist

the temptation to say a sharp thing, or a clever thing, when occasion prompts—and be sure that the devil furnishes plenty of occasions. Few of us carry about with us constantly those precepts of the Psalmist: "I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I offend not in my tongue." "I am utterly purposed that my mouth shall not offend." Few of us breathe his pious prayer before we enter into society: "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditations of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer;" yet how needful is it, if we would preserve a conscience void of offence. St. James turns our attention especially to the duty of self-restraint in this matter. He even denies the truth of that man's religion whose tongue is not kept in restraint. "Let the wise man," he adds, "shew out a good conversation, his words with meekness of wisdom." This is one of the points in which the Epistle of St. James furnishes—as many have remarked—an excellent commentary on our Lord's discourse on the mount. Observe, he is treating of wisdom;[1] and instead of considering it in its more exalted aspect, as that habit of the mind, or rather of the soul, by which man becomes acquainted with the nature of God, and his own immortal destiny, and by which he is able to foster the Divine seed sown in him, and guide to a right end his heavenward aspirations; the Apostle confines his view of wisdom to one of its most ordinary manifestations: he regards it in a very lowly type; but one which is in true accordance with

[1] James iii. 13—18.

the preaching and the life of Him who said "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

We may easily illustrate this view of wisdom from the pages of the Old Testament. Moses, who was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in word and deed, was the meekest of men. Joseph, and Daniel, men who displayed the highest order of administrative power and wisdom, were meek and gentle. Solomon, the wisest of earthly monarchs, abounded in precepts which enjoin meekness, as, "A soft answer turneth away wrath; but grievous words stir up anger." "Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry; for anger resteth in the bosom of fools." And we know the fruits of his wise administration—that Israel had peace all his days.

When we look back, after a few years have passed away, to the occasions which called forth from us angry words and reproaches, or filled us with secret jealousies and heart-burnings, how small do they appear! A little more patience; a little more self-command; a due estimate of the importance of eternal things; would have saved us, it may be, from acts which have entailed upon us long and fruitless years of repentance; at all events, from the folly of giving way to momentary anger, and venting our wrath in bitter words.

And if a few years of experience here below bring wisdom to us, so that we despise our former selves, and are conscious that we have done foolishly; how much more will the nearer view of eternal things bring us to a due sense of our want of wisdom, in suffering our tempers to get the better of our judgment! Imagine

the sorrow with which angels look down upon our strifes, and contentions, and perverse disputings! How different from our habit of mind and temper is the picture which St. James draws of the wisdom from above, which is "first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

Let us, dear brethren, pray that this heavenly temper may be ours. "Let us ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not." Let the same mind be in us which was in Christ Jesus, who, though equal with God, became as one of us—though higher than the angels, became the servant of men—though the Lord of life, became obedient to death, and that death the cross. Not in strife, nor in disputing about words, nor in party watchwords, nor in visionary schemes about the bettering of our social condition, nor in theories of government, nor in visions of an infallible hierarchy, nor in profound speculations about the origin of existing things, nor in inquiries into the laws of mind and matter, is to be found the wisdom about which the Apostle speaks: but in faith, in humility, in meekness, in a teachable spirit, in a recognition of our duties to God and man, in an entire submission of our wills to the will of God, and above all, in the constant desire to be taught of His Holy Spirit, under whose dispensation we are—in these are wisdom, and understanding, and power, and present happiness, and the earnest of immortal bliss in the presence of the Father.

[*Whitsunday*, 1859.]

XVII.

ON A HIGH STANDARD IN RELIGION.

"Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—MATT. v. 48.

THESE words of our blessed Lord hold up to us the highest conceivable standard of Christian perfection. How far such perfection is attainable by man, I shall not at present attempt to lay down, even in the most general terms; still less shall I venture to map out, or accurately define, the country over which the heaven-ward pilgrim must pass on his way to the celestial city.

It will be enough for us to-day if we consider our Lord's words in their general sense, and view them as an injunction to aim at a high standard in all that we do.

To raise himself above the condition of fallen humanity has been the desire of man ever since the expulsion of our first parents from Paradise. Men have attempted to compass this sometimes by wild exertions of earthly powers, such as the endeavour of Nimrod to raise a city to heaven, and reign as a man-god; sometimes by subtle speculations of the intellect and systems of

philosophy, which deceived the authors of them for some time into thinking themselves proof against the evils incident to humanity, till the day of misfortune came, and the utter inadequacy of any human means to compensate the fallen statesman or philosopher for the loss of all that makes life most desirable was fully shown.

We form our conceptions of God and His perfections from two sources, the one external to us, the other internal. Of these we call the one Revelation, the other Intuition. Under Revelation we may include not only oral and written communications, such as those which are preserved for us in the Book of God's Word, but also the external manifestations of the wisdom, power, and goodness of the Great Creator, displayed in His works. By Intuition we understand certain innate ideas, or inborn conceptions, or prescient vaticinations (as they have been called) in our own breasts, corresponding to the outward revelations of God, both those delivered in His Word, and those which are displayed in nature.

The consideration, "how God has revealed His perfections in outward nature," I pass over.

It concerns our present inquiry more nearly to know how God is revealed to us in Scripture.

Now, I think it will be unnecessary to quote texts to prove that God is represented to us in Scripture as infinitely wise and good; as all-powerful; as a Being of infinite benevolence joined with perfect justice; as our Creator and Preserver; and as the Dispenser of every good and every perfect gift.

Nor will it be necessary to employ any lengthy argu-

ments to prove that for man—limited as his powers are, and impaired as those very powers are by the sin which has been transmitted from generation to generation since the fall—it must be impossible to attain in the faintest degree to that perfection of holiness which Scripture ascribes to Almighty God.

Not even our first parents could do this. They yielded to an influence, and succumbed to a temptation, which there was no necessity that they should give way to, and thereby fell under the dominion of sin.

Nor was perfection attained to by God's chosen people, the Jews. Called as they were to the undivided service of God, they fell into idolatry, and the grossest sins, by which the nations surrounding them were polluted.

Still less did the heathen nations attain to a state which even themselves would allow to be perfect. St. Paul[1] shows that the world by wisdom knew not God; and if the most cultivated nations fell into such gross errors as we know them to have fallen into, it was not to be expected that the outlying nations, or barbarians, as they were contemptuously called, should raise the standard of human perfection to a high level. And this is borne out by recent and present experience of the state of the heathen world.

From this brief review we gather the important conclusion, that in all ages of the world mankind has failed to attain to the high standard of perfection set forth in the text, and in certain well known instances, has

[1] Romans i.

fallen even below the heathen standard of what man's duty is.

Let us now inquire, with a view to a better understanding of the text, on what the attainment of perfection depends.

In all earthly things it may be laid down as an axiom that, in order to attain perfection, two things are necessary :—

1. That we should have before us a right conception of the end we seek to attain.

2. That we should have an accurate knowledge of, and full power to work out, the means which are necessary to the end in view.

It is not otherwise in things spiritual. In order to be conformed to the likeness of God, we must (1) have a right conception of His pure and perfect nature. And we must (2) know by the study of His Word, and by diligently striving to live accordingly (the Holy Spirit assisting us in both), the way of holiness set before us in the Gospel.

Let us dwell on these points separately.

There is one means of becoming acquainted with the nature of that which is external to us, which is indispensable. That is *contemplation.*

God permits us to contemplate Him in His ineffable essence, as the first great Cause, as the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, in His mysterious majesty, and in the veiled glories of His deity. But to mortal *eyes* He has never *appeared,* save in visions. It was thus that He appeared to the

patriarchs and prophets of the old covenant. Thus also to Stephen, to Peter, to Paul, and John. Sometimes the form of the appearance is described, as by Ezekiel and Daniel. At other times the vision is clothed in mysterious language, as in the book of Job and the history of Elijah. Originally it would seem that all inspiration was accompanied by a vision of some kind. The earliest word for prophet was *seer*—one who had visions, to whose eyes were revealed things which were hidden from others. A veil separates us from the spiritual world. Incorporeal presences wander throughout boundless space, and are employed on various missions in this lower atmosphere in which we live. We see them not with the outward eye, and to many men the veil which separates them is utterly impenetrable. With most of us the glimpses of the infinitely true and perfect are brief and transient. Alas! this suffices for the generality of men. What matters it to them that the world is full of spiritual agencies, that angels of good and spirits of darkness are striving for the mastery over them, that tears are shed for their disobedience and continuance in sin, and smiles irradiate the countenances of the blest, when they who were sinners repent, and turn to God? What evidence do their lives afford that they are striving after any perfection, that they have the slightest idea of what perfection is, that they ever meditate on the attributes of Him who is perfect? Alas, none. The God in whom they profess to believe does not occupy such a position to them as to enter into their thoughts, and influence their imaginations. His influence

over their hearts may be compared to that of some far distant planet, whose rays occupy many years in penetrating to our earth, and then convey nothing more than a certainty of existence, with little light and no warmth.

There is, indeed, an atmosphere surrounding all that is earthly, which needs to be removed before we can discern the glories of that which is celestial. It is like the mist which we read of as hanging about the eyes of the heroes of ancient fable, which needed to be removed before they could discern the immortals ranging through the battle-field.

In proportion to the light granted to us, and the stedfastness with which we contemplate God, will be our knowledge of the highest end of man. This contemplation is the source of all that is most godlike in humanity. Works which we call inspired, are the fruits of such contemplation. It would appear that in the domain of poetry and in that of art, the spirit of man is at times admitted to a nearer view of the infinitely good and true and beautiful, and that such is the influence on the powers of expression of the spiritual elevation which ensues, that the term inspiration is loosely applied to it; and hence the poet who tells of the Divine economy, and how before Paradise was lost, the almighty Creator deigned to converse with His creatures, then innocent; and he who in the middle path of human life saw a vision of the one and the other hell. and Paradise; and the great dramatic poet, whom we love to call myriad-minded, implying that no object in the

world of sense or spirit escaped his vision; and he, whom some here can remember, who taught that in external nature an all-informing and all-encompassing Spirit ruled, and that the footsteps of the Great Creator might be traced in tree and flower and shell and pebble—all these have in their generation been called inspired; and no less the painter who traced on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel the record of the creation, and of the dealings of the Almighty with the sons of men; and he who represented in less sublime but more graceful forms in the chambers of the Vatican the chief events of Jewish history and the Apostolic times; these and others have been called *inspired*, for men saw in their works a perfection which exceeded their own imaginations, and not unnaturally ascribed it to a Divine influence. And so in one sense it must be regarded. For "every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." But we shall do well to distinguish between inspiration in its highest sense, as applied to the work of the informing Spirit, "by whom holy men spake as they were moved of old by the Holy Ghost," and inspiration in its popular sense, as applied to the works of the human imagination in its most elevated and exalted flights, and speaking to us in the language of form, or colour, or sound, or in words that awaken in us a spirit which we recognise as higher than our ordinary mood and temper.

To define precisely where the boundary between inspiration in its highest and primary, and inspiration in its lower and secondary sense lies, may appear at first

sight difficult. Neither the sublimity of the subject treated, nor the effect produced on our minds by its treatment, constitutes a sufficient claim to inspiration. Something there must be of external authority, corresponding to, and intensifying the inward impression, such, for instance, as the voice from heaven, testifying to the divinity of Christ: such as in a lower degree, the voice of the Jewish Church in favour of the Divine origin of the Old Testament, and that of the Christian Church in favour of the New. Dante and Milton may have soared as high on the wings of human imagination as Ezekiel and St. Paul; but neither of them professed to have seen distinctly, like Ezekiel, a vision of the Almighty, nor to have been caught up, like St. Paul, into the seventh heaven. Hence their works are admired as some of the noblest productions of human genius, but have never formed a part of our religious *credenda*. We regard the authors as highly gifted poets, but not prophets of the Lord.

When we take into consideration the tendency which there is in human nature to imitate that which we admire, it is evident that the contemplation of God is calculated to awaken in us a desire, and to stimulate in us an endeavour, to be like Him.

We all know how prone we are, especially in youth, to imitate the conduct of those whose characters we admire. This has its evil, as well as its good side. On the one hand, the influence of a companion who has attained to greater perfection in any good thing than we have, is likely to be beneficial. Indeed, we might

never be induced to take up a pursuit which is in every way conducive to our good, unless it were recommended to us by the example of another, whom we acknowledge as a superior. On the other hand, it is full of danger. Experience shows that we are less prone to imitate the virtues than the vices of others; less disposed to follow examples of industry, and self-denial, and obedience, and self-discipline, than of idleness, and self-indulgence, and waywardness, and insubordination. This is abundantly shown in the little world in which we live here.

And in the world without it is also shown no less clearly. Attempts to imitate men commonly result in failure. What is called hero-worship leads to gross exaggeration: moreover, the character called heroic has great vices side by side with great virtues; and we have seen that there is a natural proneness to imitate the former rather than the latter. But, apart from this, it may be taken as a general axiom, that the reproduction of another's mind is worth little, whether in the field of action, or in the domain of thought. What can be more idle than the attempt to revive the policy of a departed statesman, or to live over again the life of a past generation, or to reproduce a work of genius, whether in literature or in art! Indeed, the difficulty of imitating men is extreme. And the reason of it is, that no man is complete in his mental organization. An assembly of certain qualities enables one man to be a general, another to be a statesman, another to be a scholar; and it is only so far as the same qualities exist

in us, that we are enabled to succeed, even partially, in our imitation. In other words, imitation of human models is circumscribed by our natural organization; and it is no less so by circumstances of time and space, by the incommunicability of natural gifts, and the numerous distractions of the world around us.

Seeing, then, that imitation of human models is difficult, and that, owing to our natural constitution, and the external circumstances in which we are placed, failure is likely to attend our endeavours, we are led to embrace the more fervently—as proceeding from the highest wisdom and the tenderest love—the command, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

The highest standard at which we can aim is not only the most ennobling, but the most simple and attainable. It will be found to be true practical wisdom to aim singly and earnestly at the standard which our Lord's words holds out.

It will not answer our purpose if we endeavour to make the Divine perfection supplementary to human perfection; to rest contented with the highest and best that we see around us, as if it were absolutely the highest and the best conceivable, and when our consciences urge us to seek somewhat still higher, to have recourse to the Divine nature: that is but a serving of two masters, which can never answer. If we are contented with the lower, we shall be disqualified for the attainment of the higher. Even success in such an endeavour as tends to fix our spiritual gaze on lower

objects, when we might fix them on higher, is to be looked on as an evil rather than a good.

The true answer to the question, "How shall we be perfect?" remains to be given. If we cannot imitate Him whom we have not seen; if with our finite powers we are unable to attain, even in the lowest degree, to the perfection of the Infinite; if the imitation of human beings is difficult, and unsatisfactory, and productive of no adequate results, then we are left with no alternative but that of choosing the standard of the Gospel for ours.

"Be like Christ," is a sufficient answer to the question, and the only sufficient one. Do we desire to raise ourselves above the ordinary level of humanity? Would we do godlike deeds? Would we draw out of our inner nature all that God has put within us of nobleness, and truth, and wisdom, and courage, and self-denial, and love?

Then let us steadfastly contemplate the Lord Jesus—the Incarnate Son of God—who, as God, is able to communicate to us of the Divine nature, and who, as man, has shown us how humanity may receive the graft of that which is higher, and bring forth fruit to perfection. Let us dwell upon the perfection of His life; let us feed upon the wisdom which fell from His lips; let us learn to love the truth as it was shown forth in Him; let us meditate on His Divine love till our hearts are warmed into love like His; let us learn from Him the obedience of sons; let us put on, like Him, the grace of humility; let us view in the Son of Man the elevating effect of communion with God; let us bring before our minds

the sacredness and importance of the Lord's work; let us gather from our Lord's labours, and from the last crowning act of His life, the value of immortal souls; and then we shall be better enabled to live unto the Lord, and die unto the Lord, when He shall call us hence.

Before we can imitate Jesus we must believe in Him, and be reconciled to God through Him. And with a view to the attainment of greater likeness to Him, we must constantly *look unto* Him. This will give a tone and character to all our work, without which our labour will be misspent, and its fruits unblest. Jesus held up before our eyes will quicken our souls and draw us to Him. Is it a strange thing to you that you should be told to look to a standard higher than yourselves, and unattained by any of the sons of men? Why, such is the condition of all excellence. Ask the painter why the object he represents appears more beautiful on his canvas than in nature. He will tell you that an image of still greater, of more perfect, beauty hovers before his imagination, compared to which his production is as nothing. Ask the statesman how he has been enabled to secure the liberties and to better the condition of his countrymen. You will find that he has had before his mind something far beyond what he has attained to.

Oh! then, let not your aims be bounded by your powers, or by the achievements of those who are around you. By aiming higher you will strengthen your power, and experience the truth of the saying that "to him that hath, more shall be given."

Neither let your conduct be ruled by selfish or small views. As in the case of the young ruler, who inquired of Jesus how he might attain eternal life, and who was told to sell all that he had, we must be prepared to make sacrifices which, for the time, will appear great. But let us be assured that any preponderance given to worldly motives—whether in the choice of a profession or in the ordinary duties of life—will hinder spiritual perfection, and clog the energies of the immortal spirit within you.

Strive, then, by the grace of God, to attain the highest perfection from the highest motives. Strive to live perfect lives; to leave no part of your duty to God or man neglected; to pray perfect prayers; to believe with a perfect faith; to love with a perfect love; that Jesus Christ, your great example, may be reflected in your lives as in a pure unsullied mirror.

Alas! you may well say, "Who is sufficient for these things?" Not you, in truth, however pure your aspirations; however generous your sentiments; however earnest your endeavours to live conformably to the law of God. Conscious of short-comings, as the best of you must be; guilty and self-condemned as you must appear whenever your past life is brought to the searching test of a rigid self-examination, what can raise you from the dust of death, and place you in a position to fulfil all that is required of you—all that is expected of you here? Two things, dear brethren, which agree in one—the grace of Jesus Christ, and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, which can change your vile affections that

they may become heavenly, and quicken and restore that which was dead in you, that ye may live for evermore.

Pray that these may be vouchsafed to you abundantly. Pray that you may become one with Christ, and Christ one with you. Then will the almighty Father look on you with pleasure. We are told, in the record of the Creation, that God saw that all which He had made was good. Can this be said of man? Alas, no, excepting so far as he is renewed by grace. Pray, then, for this renewal. If God delights to contemplate the work of His hands, must He not take the highest pleasure in contemplating the excellence of His noblest work? If so, it may be in your power to contribute by your lives to the sum of that pleasure which the great and all-wise Creator derives from the contemplation of His creatures fulfilling the laws of their several beings. On the other hand, it is in your power to mar the unity of that bliss, and to produce in Him who created you, and called you to salvation, a feeling which we may, without irreverence, term disappointment, that the schemes of Divine benevolence should be marred by human perverseness.

Here, for the present, let us cease; and let us earnestly pray that by contemplation of the Godhead as He has revealed Himself to us in the person of Christ, we may learn what true perfection is, and that by the gift of the Holy Spirit operating within us, we may exemplify the same to the praise and glory of His name.

[*Last Sunday before the Midsummer Holidays*, 1859.]

XVIII.

ON THE CHARACTERISTICS OF ST. JOHN'S GOSPEL.

"*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.*"—JOHN XX. 30, 31.

IF we were to invent a text to characterise St. John's Gospel, we should probably choose some other form of words than that which the Beloved Disciple has himself selected. Some words which described the spiritual nature of the Gospel of him who was called pre-eminently the Θεόλογος would probably occur to our minds—words which drew attention to the apparent design of the Evangelist to build up believers in the faith, rather than to draw and gather in sinners to the true fold; words, lastly, which would signify the peculiar features of the Gospel narrative to which I am about to invite your attention to-day—the intimate knowledge of the mind of Christ which is displayed; the revelation of that wondrous unity of Jesus with His Father, and at the same time with His followers, which is made known; and the satisfaction which is

afforded to the speculative mind concerning the Divine mysteries which find place in the scheme of man's redemption, by the Evangelist's own statements, and the discourses of Jesus which he records—some such points as these would probably be selected by us, and embodied in a text.

But the Evangelist's own account of his design in writing the Gospel, which the Church has in all ages received as his work, is less ambitious—less indicative of a difference in tone and spirit to the other Evangelists. Salvation through faith in Christ is pointed out as the ultimate end of St. John's Gospel in its human aspect; as the demonstration of the Messiahship, the Divinity of Jesus may be said to be its main object in its Divine aspect. In the first of these there is nothing which distinguishes John from Matthew, Mark, and Luke; and in the second, although he stands pre-eminent as the assertor of the doctrine of the Son of Man's unity with God the Father, he does not stand alone. It appears, then, that St. John, in writing his Gospel, did not propose to himself any innovation upon the narratives already existing, in such a sense as to make it necessary for him to characterise his aim as different from theirs.

The differences which are observable arise from two main heads.

I. The supplementary character of the Gospel of St. John.

II. The personal disposition of the writer; to which may, perhaps, be added, the peculiar nature of the

revelation made to him as to the offices of the Holy Ghost, under whose dispensation the Church of Christ was to remain until the day of His re-appearing.

I. A glance at any of the harmonies of the four Gospels will show with what reason it has been asserted that St. John's Gospel was supplementary to the other three. Out of the many portions of the sacred story, which St. John alone has touched on, I will only remind you of a few. The repeated testimony borne to Christ by John the Baptist; the discourse of Jesus with Nicodemus; His controversies with the Jews; His discourses to the people at the great feasts; the raising of Lazarus; Christ washing the disciples' feet, and His discourses to the Twelve shortly before His crucifixion; the promise of the Comforter, and an enumeration of His offices—these most important and edifying portions of the Gospel narrative we owe entirely to St. John.

Certain facts, moreover, find place in this Gospel which are omitted in the others; and from some of these—such as the mention of Peter's name, as having wounded Malchus in the garden, and the introduction of the story of Lazarus—an argument has been drawn in confirmation of the common tradition that St. John wrote his Gospel shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem, when, Peter and Lazarus both being dead, no danger could arise to them personally from the mention of their names in connexion with the history of Jesus; whilst, from the omission of all mention of the siege and capture of Jerusalem, it has been argued that the tradition of St. John having written his Gospel in

extreme old age, towards the close of the first century, is unfounded.

But St. John's Gospel is, in a broader sense than that of supplying facts omitted by the other Evangelists, supplementary. It supplies much that we should be otherwise ignorant of, respecting the person and the Divine nature of Christ, and of the character of the religion of which He was the Founder. It is, as it were, a manifestation of another aspect of the Son of God, differing from the aspect presented by the other Evangelists—St. Luke, for instance—no less than Plato's representation of the Athenian sage differs from that of Xenophon. Looking upon this in the light of evidence, we may fearlessly assert, that the narrative of the life of Jesus acquires greater consistency and probability from this twofold, this stereoscopic view; whilst, in the adaptation of the Divine story to differently constituted minds—to the man of action and the man of thought—to those who find pleasure in the records of active benevolence, as well as those who delight in the contemplation of heavenly mysteries—we have reason to acknowledge, with grateful adoration, the wisdom of Him who knew what was in man, and the Divine benevolence of the Incarnate Saviour, and of Him in whom we live and move, and have our being, the Father Almighty.

II. St. John, more than any sacred writer, pierces within the veil, enters the holy of holies, and brings thence secret treasures for the people of God. A message he has for the world, doubtless, as all preachers of

the Gospel have, and this it is—"God so loved the world, that He gave His Only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." But he is not, like St. Luke, decidedly a gatherer in, a seeker and winner of the lost. His Gospel is especially, it would seem, addressed to the believers, of whom Mary of Bethany was a type; whose position is at the feet of their Lord; who partake of His spirit, and wait upon Him, and live by every word which cometh forth from His mouth; drinking in secrets which have no meaning to those who hear them by the ear alone; secrets which must be revealed to the heart, and which will be revealed to the patient contemplative soul, whose gaze is fixed on the Eternal God and His work. In this way, again, St. John's Gospel is supplementary. It is the *building-up* of Christians in the faith, even to the top-stone, rather than the *foundation*. St. John reveals in Christ the "Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father." Eagle-winged and eagle-eyed, he soared where no human soul had soared before; he beheld the glory of the Only-begotten Son of the Father; the glory which reaches from eternity to eternity; which He had with the Father before the world was, and which He shall have to all eternity when the number of His elect shall be completed, and when all enemies shall be subdued under His feet. St. John was the appointed medium to reveal to the Church the blessed mystery of the believers' union with Christ, and with God through Christ, "that they all may be one, even as we are one." The same

Evangelist frequently dwells on the pleasure which the Father hath in the Son; and that, too, is the comfort, the hope of believers. How so? it may be asked: Is not the relation of the Eternal Father to the Eternal Son, and the infinite love existing between the several members of the blessed Trinity—is not this merely objective truth—infinitely grand, but too high for us—suitable for the contemplation of a few, perhaps, but having no practical bearing for us? *Far otherwise.* It is *everything* to us. The infinite love of the Father to the Son, which neither cherubim nor seraphim can fathom—that love is extended to us from the moment that we abandon ourselves to Christ, and begin to walk by faith in Him. Because Christ is dear to God; because He is the elect of the Father, in whom the Father delighteth; because Christ is the beloved Son in whom the Father is well pleased; *therefore,* and for no other cause, are they who believe in Christ the elect of the Father also; beloved sons in whom also the Father is well pleased.

Let the divine St. John teach you how the reverent contemplation of the blessed Trinity, and of the union and relation of the several persons of that blessed Trinity to one another, is the very ground of *your* hope, the very life of *your* souls. Think not that these truths are too high for *you.* The youngest of us is permitted to ascend with St. John to the contemplation of these high mysteries, the contemplation of which is the cause of our sanctification. "We beholding His face are changed into the same image from glory to glory." And think not that it requires great intellect to grasp

them. They are, it is true, far beyond the reach of the highest intellect on earth, but to the little child in Christ they are revealed after a supernatural fashion. The great "Theologos" was also he who constantly addressed "little children."

And this leads us to another characteristic of St. John's Gospel. Remarkable as it is for proclaiming the high dignity of our Redeemer as co-equal and co-eternal with God, yet it is equally remarkable for the exquisite *human* sympathy which it displays. St. John, the beloved disciple, reveals our Lord in the endearing light of a man, a friend, a brother. He records earthly scenes of deep interest, and words of exquisite pathos spoken by Jesus, which none of the other Evangelists record.

How full of compassionate kindness and forbearance is His conversation with the woman of Samaria, to whom, when refused a drink of water, He freely offered the water of life. What tender sympathy is shown in the Lord's recognition of the man who had been born blind, and who had been excommunicated by the Pharisees because he gave evidence how the prophet, for such he deemed Jesus, had opened his eyes. Again, how exquisitely touching is the episode of the Saviour's friendship for the family of Bethany—how full of human tenderness, elevated and not absorbed by Divine love! How much is contained in that simple record—"Now Jesus loved Lazarus, and Martha, and Mary!" In a Divine sense the Saviour of the world loved all men. But there is something in this mention of His

love for that family which inclines us to believe that it was in a *human* sense that Jesus loved them above all others; and so also the beloved disciple, John himself. There is a mystery in friendship—that friendship of the highest kind, in which the heart makes among the many its own solemn election of a few, and *that* through some secret law of human sympathy. This election our Lord Himself made, *as a man;* finding among the multitudes with whom he held converse a few congenial hearts with whom, rather than with any others, He delighted to rest from His earthly labours. How such an example sanctifies and ennobles friendship! How calculated it is to raise us above caprice and all unworthy motives in the choice of friends. In how tender and familiar a light does it show our blessed Saviour, whose love for the family at Bethany exhibits Him as a brother, ("Our brother Lazarus is sick,") not by community of flesh and blood alone, but down to the very inmost recesses of His human soul. Take again the episode of the Lord's interview with Peter—"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" There Jesus appears as *the man* once more, desiring love, pleading for love, asking for assurance of it. Again, the Saviour's words addressed to Thomas—"Reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side"—do they not show Him to be "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh?" And that recognition of Mary in the garden, on the morning of the resurrection, does not that set forth the influence of a familiar and loved voice, suddenly striking on the ear, and addressing us by our name? That there was no internal Divine

intimation, whereby it was revealed to Mary that He who stood before her was the Son of God, I would not positively assert; but at all events there was the answer of the heart to the voice of Jesus, the Master, the beloved of her soul. In all this is exhibited the spirit of the Apostle of Love, showing forth the Divine and human love of Christ, and in that the deep and everlasting connexion between *love to God* and *love to the brethren*, which forms so large a portion of St. John's theme in his Epistles. "This is the will of God, that ye believe in Him whom He hath sent, and love one another," simple, but all-embracing summary of religion!

The personal character of St. John reflects itself no less strongly in his writings than does that of St. Paul in *his*. Contrast the starting-point of one with that of the other. St. John begins with the love of God—exhibited in the scheme of man's redemption, and illustrated in the life, the discourses, and the death of Christ. St. Paul begins with the lost condition of man, his inability to keep the law, or to live well without the law; proceeding through various stages of departure from God, he at last arrives at a total renunciation of all power, even in the regenerate, to live according to the will of God, and only finds deliverance when at the point of spiritual death—"O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Time will not permit me to dwell on this topic further, but the more we examine it the more we shall recognise

in St. John the Apostle of Love, and be struck by the contrast which he presents to Paul, the Apostle of Faith.

There are one or two more points which, before concluding, I should wish briefly to bring before you.

a. I would call upon you to acknowledge in St. John not only the Apostle of *love*, but the Apostle of *light* and *truth*.

The opening of his Gospel speaks of *life* and *light* as proceeding from the Divine Word. Jesus himself said, "I am the Light of the world." Again, in His conversation with Nicodemus, He said, "This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world;" and the Epistles contain repeated declarations such as this, "God is light"—"The darkness is past, and the true light now shineth."

Some have misconceived St. John's character, in speaking of Him as a mystic. In one sense he may be so called, as we have seen that he deals with the highest mysteries that heaven and earth contain: but in the sense of being obscure and dreamy, he is no mystic. His propositions respecting Divine things are enunciated in the clearest and simplest terms that language admits of. Would that all who deal with the deep mysteries of our being, and who profess to be teachers of others, were equally clear, equally practical!

b. Again, he is the Apostle of truth. In no other sacred writer does truth—both intellectual and moral, or rather spiritual truth—hold so prominent a place. It is in his Gospel that Jesus declares Himself

to be "the Truth." Again, it is written, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." And the channel through which truth, Divine truth, is to be communicated to the soul is described—"When He, the Comforter—the Spirit of Truth—is come, He shall guide you into all truth." Is this promise fulfilled? Fulfilled it has been to the Apostles, but by the Church of Christ it has been only partially realized. Who, on a survey of the religion of those countries which profess Christianity, can say that the Church of Christ has found the truth, and abides in it? In Catholic countries how much of superstition—what exaltation of the priest to the office of the Great High Priest of all believers—what darkness of ignorance is there! In Protestant countries how much of infidelity and scepticism; what an uncertain hold of the truth once committed to the saints, and what a weak faith in the everliving presence of the Church's Head, and in the power of the Holy Spirit!

Surely if the spirit of the Apostle John were more largely diffused among us, we should see less of ignorance, less of merely outward worship. We should not hear of churches being closed because of the puerilities enacted therein by the ministers, or the indecent rioting indulged in by the people. We should not see Christian people living in such carelessness respecting the condition of the world about them; as if an impassable gulf was between them and other members of the human family—conduct which would seem to argue a forgetfulness of the great truth

that the love of God in Christ was manifested for the salvation of the world. We should not behold with careless eyes a work of the Spirit going on in our land, and bringing thousands into communion with God. Rather we should take our stand upon the promises made to us in the Gospel which we have been this day considering. We should expect, and pray for, and welcome to our own hearts, the fourfold operation of the Spirit of which we read in the pages of St. John.

(1) We should look for the Holy Spirit as the source of inspiration in our prayers, and as the earnest of Christ's interest in us, and mediation for us. This is the work of the Holy Spirit indicated under the title of Paraclete.

(2) We should expect the same person of the Blessed Trinity to "bring all things to our remembrance," not merely in a sense analogous to that in which the first preachers of the Gospel were reminded of all that their Master said and did; but so that the life of Christ should be to us a present and enduring reality, and that we should be ready at all times to remember our duty to Him, and to shape our conduct by the requirements of His Word.

(3) We should look for the fulfilment of the promise, "He shall guide you into all truth," not only as to the facts and doctrines of Christianity, but as to the questions which agitate the world at present, and as to the nature of the world to come. The presence of God's Holy Spirit will enable us to "try the spirits," that is, to investigate the claims of opinions put forward, and

arguments maintained, and events which are asserted to have taken place; all with reference to Divine truth—to the question, "Are these things of God?"

(4) And lastly. We should hope for the fulfilment to us personally of the promise—He shall teach you all things—He shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.

The knowledge of Divine things is not acquired by mere industry and application, as the knowledge of secular things is. It needs a special revelation of God to the soul. You will not find anywhere a Christian who is wise in the hidden things of God, to whom God has not manifested Himself by the Holy Spirit. Pray, then, for this inward revelation. It is not often vouchsafed except in answer to prayer, and meditation, and the earnest striving of the heart Godward.

Think not that the habit of meditation on things Divine or human is a waste of time. Rather deem it as an essential requisite of true greatness in action, true readiness in the hour of need.

Count not St. John, the apostle of love, the revealer of mysteries, an ineffectual witness to the truth of Christ in this our age. Rather look upon him as the exponent of the highest truths which the human intellect is capable of grasping, and as the one of all the sacred writers in whose theology *knowledge* occupies the most prominent position.

Bear these thoughts with you to the study of his gospel, and to your daily work. Let not the pursuit of knowledge—especially of secular knowledge—hinder

your love for Christ, and for the brethren; and may He whose word is truth, sanctify you through the truth, and dispose you to receive into your inmost hearts the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, to the praise and glory of His name.

[*25th September*, 1859.]

XIX.

ON CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULNESS OF CHRIST.

"*Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*"—EPH. IV. 13.

THE standard of Christian perfection given by our Lord in His Sermon on the Mount is, "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." That is a standard which human experience will not enable us to attain to. Human imagination can scarcely raise itself to such a height; human reason cannot estimate the fulness of the Divine perfection.

But the standard held up by the text—"the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ"—seems more attainable. The form of the Son of Man was once familiar to the eyes of men. He had living witnesses of His ministry; He had even partners and associates in it; some of whom have handed down to us, who have come after, the leading events in the life of Christ. His conversations are recorded; His miracles are described by eye-witnesses; the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth are preserved for our admonition and instruction—so that we may use the language of the

beloved disciple, and say, "Of His fulness have we all received, and grace for grace."

Let me, therefore, endeavour to draw out of the words of the text such a measure of Christian perfection as you, who have been instructed in the leading facts and doctrines of Christianity, may be able to apprehend: and may He who is ever ready to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him be present with us, and give us abundantly of that Spirit, that we may grow in knowledge and wisdom, and realize in its fulness the Christian life, and prepare ourselves for the second advent of Jesus by conforming ourselves to His image.

In the beginning of the chapter the apostle exhorts the Ephesians to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called." And he then proceeds to enumerate certain heads of Christian observance, one main point upon which he dwells being *unity*.

Now it is to be observed of this unity, that it differs widely from uniformity. Uniformity implies a close resemblance in the ingredients of any compound body; unity is a cohesion of parts which have an affinity for each other, but are distinct and different.

To take a familiar illustration. Nothing can be more similar in kind than the individual sheep of a flock. A stranger does not detect any difference between them. Only the shepherd's eye distinguishes them. They are as uniform as possible; yet no transformation can make them one.

Take on the other hand an instance of chemical combination. The elements are as unlike as can be; yet

they have such an affinity to one another that they seem drawn together by an irresistible compulsion, and form one substance.

So it is in the Christian body. A Church cannot possess unity or coherence if it be made up of parts which absolutely and in all particulars resemble one the other. There must, it would seem, be diversity in the ingredients, otherwise the whole will not be truly one.

This truth is set forth very fully in the first Epistle to the Corinthians. There the apostle Paul, after stating generally that "there are diversities of gifts, but the same spirit," proceeds to show how the grace of God works in various channels, and employs various instruments to produce that unity and compactness of organization which the Church of Christ, or, as it is called, His body, requires. And writing to the Ephesians in the same strain, he says—"And He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ," the ultimate end and purpose of which is set forth in the words of the text.

With respect to the first point, "the unity of the faith," it may be observed that in the apostolic times there were dissensions in the Church no less than in later times. An external unity is not to be thought of. The interpretation put upon these words by the Church of Rome is neither borne out by reason nor by history. The unity of which St. Paul speaks is an agreement about the leading facts and doctrines of

Christianity, such as those which are summed up in the Apostles' Creed, or by St. Paul, when he says, writing to the Corinthians,[1] "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them:" and again, in writing to Timothy, "Great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."[2]

We often gain a clearer idea of a writer's meaning by contrast. With the unity of the faith here spoken of we may contrast the state of those who are "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine,[3]" who have "the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them;" looking to which, the apostle warned the Colossians—"Let no man beguile you with enticing words," and said, "Beware, lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, and after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."[4]

In all times there have been false teachers, whose business it has been to seduce men from the true faith; and this is done in more ways than one. It is as frequently done by narrowing the grounds of acceptance with God, as by enlarging the bounds of Christian liberty. There are some now who would revive the letter of ancient and dead ordinances—saying, in effect, "touch not, taste not, handle not"—beguiling the weak believer of his reward in a "voluntary humility,"

[1] 2 Cor. v. 19. [2] 1 Tim. iii. 16. [3] Eph. iv. 14, 18. [4] Col. ii. 4, 8.

instead of urging upon all who are striving after salvation, and especially on the young, the duty of consecrating all their faculties to God.

Against a form of religion which condemns as destructive to the soul all that is not strictly devotional and spiritual, the spirit of Christian liberty and Christian tolerance rebels. "Knowledge of the Son of God," which is the second point brought before us in the text, ought to keep us from such narrowness of mind. For the gospels bring Christ before us as Son of Man also; inheriting, with the human body which He derived from His mother, human wants, and being able to enter into human weaknesses. It was in this spirit that He said, in answer to those who questioned Him why His disciples fasted not, as John's did—"Can the children of the bride-chamber mourn while the bridegroom is with them?" He deigned to grace and sanctify with His presence the marriage feast, and the social entertainment. On more than one occasion He provided for the hungry and thirsty, as He did for the sick and needy. And we are justified in regarding these instances of our Lord's conduct as typical. If Jesus did not turn away His face from human recreations, we are not to inveigh against them as wrong and dangerous. If He, by His example, encouraged the moderate use of God's gifts, we are not to pronounce them "common and unclean."

We may learn much from the study of the merely human aspect of our Lord's character. How much more, then, from the knowledge of Him as Son of God. How will the thought of God's love to perishing sinners, shown

in the scheme of man's redemption through Christ, quicken our love and urge us to obedience! How fit an occupation for the season of Christ's advent is the study of His character as the Only-begotten of the Father, Creator of the worlds, the express image of Him whom no man hath seen nor can see, the Angel of the covenant which God made with His ancient people, the source and also the object of prophecy; and again as the Prince of Righteousness, the living impersonation of the love of God, the author of everlasting life, the conqueror of the grave and vanquisher of Satan, the bestower of gifts to men, the future Judge of all mankind, and the King of saints! These are subjects of contemplation, the fulness of which we can never exhaust. To know Him that is "true;" this is—in the words of the beloved disciple—"the true God, and eternal life."

Alas! how very small a portion of His character do men know! Even the most spiritually minded are apt to take very one-sided views of Him in whom dwelt "all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." And, taking these one-sided views, the character of their religion becomes one-sided—either they lean exclusively to practical duties, or to meditation and prayer, or to asceticism, or to the frequent use of religious ordinances—and, whatever may be their consistency upon this one point, they are inconsistent upon others. They may be exemplary in their own lives, but uncharitable towards others; they may have the form of outward godliness, but by their indulgence in some sin—of temper, of rashness, and inconsiderateness, or of censoriousness, may "deny

the power thereof:" and this is so much the more to be lamented, as by so doing they not only peril their own hopes of eternal salvation, but make religion unpalatable to others.

How then are we to avoid such disastrous consequences to ourselves and those with whom we have to do? By striving after perfection in all things, in every part of our nature, in body, soul, and spirit; by endeavouring to present our bodies "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God;" by making the best use of our intellectual powers, not only that we may be able to "give a reason of the faith that is in us," but that we may show ourselves thankful participators in the gift of reason, which, like every other good and perfect gift, "cometh down from above, even from the Father of lights;" by cultivating, moreover, whatever talents God has given us—the exercise of which may in any way conduce to the happiness of those who are around us.

It is one of the chief characteristics of public-school education that provision is made for the exercise of most of the faculties which will come into play in after life. A certain degree of perfection is attainable by boys, a certain degree by men. The latter is, of course, higher; but there may be no less of symmetry in the former.

You have here the means of acquiring that ready use of your bodily organs—quickness and dexterity of hand, fleetness of foot, and strength of frame—which will render the discharge of the practical duties of life easier to you, and more effectual. I should be glad to see that individual training which you all, more or less, give

yourselves, supplemented by a systematic training, which would enable you to act together and in unison with others, if you should ever be called upon to take arms in defence of your country.

Before I quit the subject of bodily training, let me speak a word of hopeful encouragement to those of you who are not endowed with more than average mental ability—perhaps with less than the average. If you do your utmost in cultivating the gifts which you have, in preserving that purity of mind and body which is no less attainable by you than by your more highly gifted companions; if you speak the truth from the heart; if you set your face against anything that is unjust, dishonest, unmanly, or underhand; you may do great good by your example here, and raise the character of this college hereafter, when you are engaged in the active duties of life, no less than if you carried off all the prizes held out to intellectual eminence here, and distinguished yourselves in similar contests at the universities.

Even those among you who are endowed with strong passions, and are in some danger of being led astray by the desires of the flesh, without any strong counter-attraction such as that which intellectual tastes supply, may find in the Christian scheme encouragement and ground for hopeful exertions. If you can overcome the tempter, yours is the greater victory; your example will afford a greater encouragement to others, and redound more to the glory of God. It is not always the keenest intellects, or the most richly stored minds, that make the best citizens. It is against all experience that the

qualities which enable men to take a lead in military or civil affairs, in Church or State, should be found in many at the same time; and even if it were so, the number of leaders must be strictly limited, that of the followers must be infinitely greater. Therefore, the qualities which enable men to work well under authority, in subordinate positions of trust and responsibility, are the most widely and extensively useful to a community. Let this be an encouragement to those who are sometimes left behind in the intellectual race here. Let them trust in the promises of God, and rest assured that unto them also "shall be given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

There is another class to whom I would say a word—those, I mean, who prefer the cultivation of the taste to the severer studies and exercises of the mind. To the lovers of poetry, of the fine arts, and of music, there is room within the Christian scheme. I do not think it is without significance, that the noblest lyric poetry in the world is contained in the writings of the Hebrew prophets. It is not to be altogether forgotten, that the man after God's own heart, in whose psalms we find the expression of every feeling which suffering or triumphant humanity has ever given utterance to, as well as the impassioned pleadings of a soul before God, played on the harp, and sang his own songs before the Lord. Why should we doubt that God can find occupation in Heaven for such faculties as confessedly elevate the soul of man, when exercised in a spirit of reverence?

Why is it that in the record of the Jewish temple in

the Book of Chronicles, in the vision of the temple with its ornaments in the later prophecies of Ezekiel, and in the description of the New Jerusalem in the Revelation of St. John, so many circumstances are dwelt on which seem to appeal to one sense alone—sight, and the feeling for beauty? Surely, without indulging in any extravagance, we are justified in asserting that God, who has implanted in man a love of the beautiful, intended that the faculties which minister to that love should be exerted; and that He gave His sanction, once for all, to such exertions, by permitting them to be used in the decoration of His temple.[1]

There can be no doubt that the study of music and of the fine arts tends to refine and soften the asperities of our rugged human nature; and if we give these pursuits their due place in education, we shall neither reject them as godless, nor insist too much on their efficacy. They are but instruments; the men and women who use them are the players. They may be employed in the service of God, or they may be perverted to work out Satan's purposes. It is the moral choice of the agent which determines the character of

[1] If there could be any doubt about this matter, it would, I think, be dissipated by the words of Moses, who introduced Bezaleel to the children of Israel as a fitting man to be entrusted with the making of the tabernacle:—"See, the Lord hath called by name Bezaleel, and hath filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship; and to devise curious works, to work in gold, and silver, and brass, and the cutting of stones to set them, and in carving of wood, to make any manner of curious work, and he hath put in his heart that he may teach," &c.—Exod. xxxv. 30—34, where not only the practical artist, but the founder of a school of artists is described.

the act, and not the instrument employed. Hence, let us not be deterred from a love of Church-music because Romanists excel in it, or because Romanizing Protestants cultivate it. Luther was the greatest enemy to Romanism, and one of the most devoted lovers of music that ever lived.

Generally it may be said that the cultivation of this part of our nature, by the study of poetry, especially of the ancient models, of music, and the fine arts, tends to general refinement, and contributes to the enjoyment of life, makes us familiar with the thoughts and sentiments of great men, gives expression to feelings of the purest and most elevated kind, which find no other adequate exponent, and diverts our attention from self and selfish objects. To cut off these sources of interest and enjoyment might not materially, if at all, affect our prospects of eternal happiness, or our usefulness in life ; but it would argue a misconception of the gracious intentions of the Creator, so far as they may be gathered from the constitution of man, and the relation to external nature in which he is placed.

I have spoken briefly of intellectual training. Let me add one or two more pleas for its adoption into the Christian scheme. To comprehend the exact meaning of the Holy Scriptures requires more than diligence and earnestness. It demands a proper exercise of the reasoning faculties, a mind capable of forming judgments, and of deciding between various methods of interpretation. If no one else is required to "search the scriptures" in a critical spirit, surely it is the imperative

duty of the clergy, who are called upon to defend the Church of Christ against attacks of atheists, sceptics, and worse, perhaps, than all, misguided friends. Who is to be expected to take away the reproach of worldly men, that the clergy are behind the education of the day, if the foundations of knowledge be not laid secure and deep when our future ministers are being trained at school and college?

No knowledge is to be despised which promotes the influence of a godly man in his own sphere of usefulness. In dealing with mechanics, with manufacturers, with agriculturists, with men of all classes, a knowledge of the principles of their calling is the surest passport to their confidence and regard. It is like a bridge connecting the opposite banks of a river, upon which dwell men of kindred races, but disunited by some political accident. The barrier once broken, intercourse becomes easy.

There is a great variety of work to be done in life: hence the necessity of varied powers to accomplish it. Let each one aim at conforming himself to the image of Christ in those particulars which will best adapt him for the special work before him, and thus, through the Christian character of individual believers, the body of the faithful will be Christianized.

We are apt to think of Jesus as infinitely beyond us in power, in wisdom, in goodness. So He was; but our Lord's spiritual stature is no less to be measured by its *completeness* than its magnitude. He was more than a perfect *man:* He was a perfect *human being*, combining, as

has been well said, the attributes of womanhood with those of manhood; gentleness with undaunted courage; longsuffering with burning zeal; tender sympathy with strong antagonism. And *his* nature will most resemble Christ's, who exhibits in the highest degree those blended qualities of mind and heart which produce internal symmetry.

O, what a consummation of our hopes and endeavours, if we could in any degree attain to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ! What an all-important question for us, "How are we to attain to it?"

Brethren, this must be by union with Christ. "As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Christ."[1] This is the broad principle laid down; and St. Paul explains the manner of the believer's union with Christ, when he speaks of "growing up unto Him in all things, which is the head... From whom the whole body fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."[2]

Pray for this union. Seek to ensure it while your youthful minds are susceptible of good impressions—"dum faciles animi juvenum, dum mobilis aetas"—seek it in the spring-tide of your youthful strength, seek it in full assurance of faith, and in the power of the Holy Ghost; seek it not for yourselves, but for the glory of God, that God may be all in all.

[1] John xv. 4. [2] Eph. iv. 15, 16.

And if it should seem too great a matter for some of you to raise your thoughts to, bethink yourselves of the gracious acceptance that little children met with from Jesus Christ. There are, of course, many degrees between you and the mature Christian; so, also, there are many degrees between the stature of the most advanced Christian, and the measure of the fulness of Christ.

What we would urge you to, in the name of the Lord Jesus, is to be perfect in your relations to God, to your parents and masters, and to your companions and school-fellows. If you exhibit towards God the docility, the reverence, the obedience, the love which you are capable of feeling towards Him as your Father—if you come to Him in the name of Jesus Christ His Son, praying for the gift of His Holy Spirit, and that His grace may be sufficient for you in boyhood and youth, He will in no wise cast you out, but will enable you to satisfy the various claims which Christian society has upon you. As you advance in years, you will gain higher and more comprehensive views of your duty, and will, by God's blessing, find the means of doing everything—even those indifferent actions of which life is partly made up—to the Lord Jesus. The Apostle selects as a type of those, eating and drinking. Surely, if the attention to our bodily wants is to be made a matter of principle, and consecrated to a high end, that which forms the basis of your school-life—intellectual culture—may be similarly consecrated. In one way it is so: by the prayers with which every morning school is opened, and every afternoon school is closed. Let this be no idle

form to you, but join in the prayers of our Liturgy heartily, and listen attentively to the words of Scripture which precede them. Carry the same principle into all your studies, all your pursuits, all your recreations. If you breathe a sincere prayer, that whatever you are about to do may be done in the fear of God, and tend, however remotely, to His glory, there will be less fear of your being drawn into sin, less danger of your disappointing the wishes of your parents and guardians, and making shipwreck of your own hopes, by falling into habits of idleness, self-indulgence, folly, and open sin.

You are about to rejoin your families, and to engage in that social intercourse, those pleasures, and those amusements, which are associated with the season of Christmas.

Try and recollect, during that period, the event which the Church commemorates at that time. Jesus, who now supplies to the Christian world the measure of the stature of the perfect man, was once a little child—younger than the youngest of you, weaker than the weakest, more helpless than the most helpless. Even that wondrous and perfect life had a beginning. Do not, then, entertain a doubt that He looks favourably and lovingly on the beginning of your spiritual life. Shrink not from laying before Him your every want, your every sorrow, your every difficulty; and let the voice of Faith whisper to you the assurance, that you, too, "out of weakness shall be made strong;" and that if you really strive after perfection in body, soul, and spirit, to the end that God may be glorified in you, He

will lead you through all stages of spiritual progress, until at last, on the eve of your departure, you may be enabled to say, in humble confidence in the merits of your Redeemer, and in adoring wonderment of the Spirit's work within you, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the Faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

[*Last Sunday before the Christmas Holidays,* 1859.]

XX.

ON THE DANGER OF RESISTING CONSCIENCE.

And the Lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."—ACTS v. 5.

THE dealings of God with man are as various as the human heart. To some He shows Himself in the light of a tender Father; to others He assumes the character of a terrible Judge. Especially in reclaiming sinners from the error of their ways, the God of wisdom displays the manifoldness of His resources. Some are gradually brought to see their sins in the light in which they appear to God; others are arrested suddenly in their course, and brought face to face with spiritual dangers, of which they were before unconscious. Such was the case with the Apostle Paul. His sudden conversion, and the correspondence between his natural and his engrafted character, between what he was by nature and education, and what he became by grace, will furnish us with some topics of consideration before we enter upon the main subject which the text brings before us—the danger of resisting the will of God, whether revealed to us externally, or borne witness to by our conscience.

The natural disposition of Saul of Tarsus was that of a highly energetic and single-minded man, who devoted himself with ardour and alacrity to whatever he took in hand. His natural powers of mind had received the highest cultivation which the schools of Tarsus could bestow; he had sat at the feet of Gamaliel at Jerusalem, and had added to his literary and philosophic training all the traditional learning which the wisest and most enlightened of the Pharisees was able to impart. Thus armed and furnished with intellectual weapons, and instructed in all the controversial theology of the Pharisees, Saul took his part among those who argued with Stephen, and he was probably overcome by him in argument, not being able to resist the spirit and wisdom with which he spoke. The first record of him is, that the witnesses at Stephen's martyrdom laid down their clothes at his feet; the next, that he made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and helping to drag away to prison the Christians whom he found. The consequence of this was a dispersion of the Christians in different directions, and with them the propagation of evangelical truth. Finding scarcely any objects of persecution remaining at Jerusalem, Saul, "yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter, went to the high priest," demanding to be sent to Damascus, to carry on the same persecution that he had begun at Jerusalem.

It has been said that there is scarcely any crime which has not been perpetrated under the name of religion. Here was an instance, proving the truth of the saying. A man of high cultivation and religious

fervour did not scruple to hand over to their enemies men and women who differed from him in their religious belief. Though both acknowledged one God, and the commandment, Thou shalt do no murder, yet, because the Christians placed their hopes of salvation in Jesus Christ, whereas the Jews held that observance of the Mosaic Law was necessary, all points of agreement were overlooked, and non-conformity on one point—truly a vital one—suggested bloody and malignant thoughts, such as issued in deeds of murder and violence. Still, however misled, however bigoted, Saul of Tarsus was at least sincere. His high spirit was bent to the full height, and he was not to be deterred from his inhuman project by any slight obstacle or gentle persuasion.

He resembled in his headlong career the horse of the desert, which the Bedouin will ride at full speed up to the traveller, or towards some impenetrable barrier, and suddenly drawing in the rein will reduce the fiery courser to the semblance of a statue; immovable in limb, and only showing by the dilated nostril and heaving flank the violent exertion it has gone through. To Saul the light from heaven and mysterious voice—perhaps recalling to his mind the vision which Stephen had borne witness to—acted like the Arab's curb. He fell to the earth, bereft of all power, no longer an instrument of vengeance, but rather an object of compassion: stricken down by a supernatural agency, and forced to give heed to his Divine questioner: "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?"

Often, we may imagine, in his after career did those

words recur to him. Often must he have been reminded that the Lord Jesus makes the grievances of His servants His own. And whenever he felt disposed to complain of the persecution of his countrymen, which baffled his efforts for their good, and made him a wanderer from city to city, he must have been reassured by the thought that the Lord is mindful of His own, and that a blessing was pronounced not only on those who should labour for Christ, but on those who should be persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Mark, however, the immediate effect upon Saul. The words, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks," revealed to him at once the true nature of his conduct. No longer a burning and a shining light of Judaism, he was convicted of being a stumbling-block and a rock of offence to the believers in Christ; not a fellow-worker with the saints, but a confederate of evil spirits—a bolt shot from the bow of the Prince of Darkness against the children of light. What an appalling discovery was this for a high-souled and conscientious man—that, at the very moment when he thought he was doing God service, he was crucifying the Son of God afresh, and putting Him to open shame!

Oh! that the energy, the earnestness of purpose, the high courage, the truthfulness, the bold demeanour, that men exhibit in a mistaken cause, could in all cases be so suddenly arrested, and turned to the service of God. Oh! that the same humble confession of error which issued from the lips of Saul, the same appeal for

guidance and instruction which he uttered, might issue from the heart of every sinner to whom God in His mercy has revealed the danger in which he lies: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

With Saul there was no making of excuses; no palliation of guilt. He had sinned openly and in broad day, and his confession was complete—an expression of readiness to enter upon a new course of life, followed by implicit obedience. This is the confession of a man of deeds, of a man of generous temper, not of a man of words or selfish views. His first public acts after his conversion proved the genuineness of his repentance; he who had been a persecutor of all who followed Christ now proved the truth of the Gospel which had been committed to him, preaching so openly as to draw upon himself the persecution of the Jews. The fiery zeal and high courage which had formerly made him foremost among the Church's enemies became, through the grace of God, effectual instruments in breaking down national prejudices, in opposing sectarianism, and in showing to the enemies of the Gospel that its ministers sought not selfish ends, but the salvation of souls. Paul the Apostle laboured in the cause of his Master more abundantly than all—even than those who had known the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry—shrinking not from collision with the elder Apostles, bearing testimony to the truth before kings and governors, and enduring all the persecutions of his countrymen with a constancy of heroism to which the world's history can scarce find a parallel.

This was what Paul became, by the grace of God—a

glorious instance of the transforming power of vital Christianity; with none of his energy abated, none of his high spirit quelled; but with all his bitterness changed into compassion, and his furious bigotry replaced by zeal for the Church of Christ. My brethren, can we sufficiently adore the mercy and the wisdom of God as shown in dealing with the spirit of Paul? How unlike to the ways of men are His ways! How wonderfully united for the conversion of the misguided soul of Paul were the power, the terrors, and the loving-kindness of God!

What a check to persecuting zeal is in the words, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest!" My wounds which I endured for man's redemption are re-opened, and my spirit grieved by thy blind and furious zeal. Yet I have the power to crush all opposition, to hurl down from the pinnacle of human greatness whosoever opposes himself to the truth, therefore beware—"It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." *Surely,* albeit *slowly,* the purposes of God are accomplished; His Church is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Warnings are sent to the impenitent sinner, sometimes by a voice speaking to him from without, sometimes by the still voice of conscience from within. Such warnings are not to be despised. Where conviction of sin takes place, *there* an immediate amendment of life should follow; the spirit's humble confession to God should issue in the inquiry—"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" A negative state of existence is not allowed to the follower of Christ. He must enter

upon his new life, with its positive duties, at once, and without delay. Let him not be daunted by the remembrance of past errors. The Spirit of God is able to work a change in him, by virtue of which he will be able to serve the Lord more effectually than ever before he served the world and Satan. The devoted follower of the world may become a *more* devoted follower of Christ; and the remembrance of earthly follies may be blotted out, and youthful indiscretion give way to the true wisdom of after life.

This is the bright side of the picture. But the text exhibits to us another side, one fraught with warning, gloomy as death. God does not multiply indefinitely the opportunities of repentance. He calls upon the sinner, and no answer is given; He calls again, again the spiritual ear is closed, and the world is all in all. Does He call again? Not always. "My Spirit, it is written, shall not always strive with man." And then what follows? a relapse into greater darkness than before. A hardening of the heart, which makes it callous and inaccessible to all appeals. You know what follows when you pay no heed to the sound of an alarum, or the voice of one who calls you in the morning. You fall into a deeper sleep, and the sound that was sufficient to wake you ceases to produce any effect. Just so it is with the soul. If you listen not to the voice of God, whether He speaks to you by word or deed, you fall into a deeper spiritual slumber, and calls to repentance, exhortations, and warnings, are no more to you than the howling of the wind on a stormy night, or

the sound of water falling on your ear when you are a-bed.

Still more gloomy is the aspect of the soul when Satan has obtained such a mastery over the heart as to seduce the understanding, and hurry the sinner onward into acts of open rebellion against God. The sight of a strong, energetic nature wilfully going astray, and sinning against conviction, is a sight to make angels weep. Who can tell of the misery and danger of a state of rebellion against God? Who can adequately represent its false lights, its false standard of right and wrong, its feverish excitement, its substitution of small and momentary gratifications for great and lasting joys? The day will come when the folly, the danger, and the guilt of rebellion against God, of stifling the convictions of the heart, will be known, and God's justice will be fully vindicated. That day may be nearer than we think; but even should this be the case, if it should come before this generation has passed away, it will not precede the day of mercy; that has already dawned upon the world, and the Sun of Righteousness has never set, nor has His healing power been extinguished.

On the one hand, there is the assurance, "Whosoever cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out;" on the other, "I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest."

Yes, brethren, it is not against your own interests, against your parents' wishes, and hopes, and prayers, against the authority of those who are set over you, that you rebel, whenever, in the little world in which you

live, you do, or say, things which your consciences tell you are wrong. It is the Lord Jesus, who loved you, and gave Himself for you—it is none other than He whom you persecute; therefore is the warning to you more powerful, "It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." For in matters of human adjudication there is sure to be somewhat of injustice, somewhat of mistaken motives, something of that which the Roman satirist described when he wrote "The Censorship gives pardon to the ravens, but deals harshly with the doves," somewhat, too, of irritation mixed up, though there is also much that is just and equitable, much that is considerate and forbearing. But in spiritual matters, in God's dealings with us, there is no such thing as injustice, or any mistake, or peevish irritation, or want of perception, or of considerateness. Our whole conduct, in its integrity, in its strength and in its weakness, in its submissiveness and its perverseness, in its angry strife and discord, in its aspirations and hopes, and in its earnest strivings after truth, lies patent before the eye of Almighty Wisdom and Almighty Love. And Jesus, who rescued Paul from the headlong perdition upon which he was running, is watching our every purpose, and bidding us remember that, in every act of sin that we commit, we persecute, not only ourselves, but Him who loved us with an everlasting love, and would have all men come unto Him that they might have life. He was gentle and meek, yet He withholds not His sympathy from the high-couraged and the impetuous. He is always ready to reclaim them from

the paths of error, and direct their energies into a wiser and better course. As the greater triumph consists in overcoming the greater difficulties, so in the reclaiming of a sinner from the headlong course of ruin the grace of God is more abundantly shown than in the preserving from evil one of those amiable and childlike spirits who seem to have fewer temptations and less struggles with evil than others. Moreover, the example of those who are endowed with high courage and resolution is more attractive, and more likely to be followed for evil or for good than that of the gentle and retiring. For the sake of others, then, it is a subject for earnest prayer, that the leaders of opinion in any society, in Church and State, at college and at school, may be taught of God, and may follow their conscientious convictions in practice.

For their own sake it is also a matter of vital importance that they should do as the Apostle Paul did, in listening at once to the voice of Jesus—to His remonstrance, and to His warning.

For as the energy of character, of which we have been speaking, makes error more conspicuous, and accelerates the spirit's downfal, so, when the grace of God has transformed earthly affections into heavenly, and brought the sinner to look upon sin as an act of ingratitude towards the most loving friend that he has —even towards Jesus who died for him—when he has sought and found forgiveness and reconciliation with God, and the sanctifying influence of His Holy Spirit, there is nothing which does not lie open to the ambi-

tious soul—an honourable and useful life on earth, opportunities of serving God and bringing others into His service, a death full of hope, and an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

[*Preached shortly after a disturbance at one of the Boarding Houses,* 1859.]

XXI.

ON SPIRITUAL GROWTH.

"*And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.*"—LUKE II. 52.

THESE words bring before us the picture of a godly youth. They present to us the image of a continual growth in all mental and bodily gifts, and a constant advance in the grace of God and the good-will of man. Such a picture is surely one, the features of which ought to interest us, whether we are engaged in the work of educating others, or are ourselves undergoing a course of education. To all of us it must be beneficial to look away from the unfolding of imperfect characters to the formation of one that was perfect; to contemplate the Son of Man, not in the fulness of His strength, but in a state of growth and progress; and to divest our minds of all that is foreign to the scriptural account of Jesus, in order that we may apprehend more clearly the great truths which are contained in the doctrine of the Incarnation, and may, in applying those truths to our life and conversation, avoid errors of misconception, and such as spring from a confused idea of Him who was very God as well as very man.

May the Holy Spirit direct us in our inquiry this morning, and enable us to draw such lessons from the passage of Scripture before us as may be most conducive to our souls' welfare.

The text naturally divides itself into four heads. There is a twofold development spoken of, and a twofold result or concomitant. We are called upon to observe the growth of Jesus, first, in bodily stature; secondly, in wisdom; and, as a concomitant of these, to behold Him increasing, thirdly, in favour with men; and, fourthly, in favour with God.

Before considering these separately, we are led to make the general remark, that the early life of Jesus is as far removed from the marvellous as it is possible. It is nothing like a romance. Had it been so, we should have had abundant anecdotes, showing the marvellous precocity of the heaven-born child. Such stories do exist in great numbers, but they are without any reliable foundation. Here, as elsewhere, we have great cause to wonder at the silence of Holy Scripture. St. Luke, who gives a fuller account than the other Evangelists of the life of Christ previous to His ministry, confines himself to two brief notices of the growth of the infant Saviour, and the episode of His journey to Jerusalem with His parents when He was twelve years old. In all this, there is not a word said of any supernatural agency. The sacred penman represents the child Jesus as growing in stature, and waxing strong in spirit; he speaks of the grace of God being upon Him, and recounts an instance in which His understanding exhibited itself at the early

age of twelve in so strong a light as to cause wonder among the doctors in the Temple. But he says nothing of any sudden and instantaneous inpouring of Divine and human wisdom into the soul of the child. Doubtless it would have been easy for God to have done so. But then the Saviour would not have been to us a perfect example of childhood, as well as manhood. Christianity would have been stripped of one of its characteristic wonders—that the mind which ordered the events of the creation, forecasting the revolutions of planets and planetary systems, and assigning to every particle of matter its own proper sphere and function in the universe of things, could descend into the soul of a little child, and could there expand itself from a small beginning, till it reached the maturity of human wisdom. Had the faultless, perfect spirit of the Son of God been united to a faultless, perfect body, the result would have been an admirable and adorable being, but not the compassionate human Saviour, who learned obedience as a child, who was touched with a feeling of our infirmities, being tempted like as we are. So, too, in our human frame. It would have been easy for the Almighty Creator to endow us with bodies corresponding to the Divine life within us. But it was not His will; rather, He endowed us with bodies of humiliation, presenting a contrast, not an analogy, to our Divinely-informed rational spirits. Hence we are taught to look forward to the new creation, when we shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

I. Let us now regard the child Jesus growing in body, under the care of Mary and Joseph. It seems a small thing for the sacred penman to direct our attention to—a child growing so many inches every year—a boy increasing in strength and activity, and the use of his limbs. But we shall do well not to think lightly of anything that is written for our learning. We shall best show our wisdom if we despise not the small beginnings of that life which has so greatly influenced the life of the world.

We know that, among the Jews, no one was qualified to be a priest who had any bodily defect or blemish. It behoved the sacred historian, therefore, to show that our great High Priest had no bodily disqualification for His office. He was destined, after thirty years spent in obscurity, to lead a life of energetic labour and endurance of hardship for the space of three years. For this a frame capable of ordinary fatigue was surely necessary. Even for the toil of His daily employment Jesus needed those bodily powers of which St. Luke briefly describes the increase.

It must be so. Brilliant examples may exist of men triumphing for a time over natural defects and constitutional maladies; but, as a rule, the active work of life is done by those who have not only mental, but bodily vigour. Such is the intimate connexion between body and soul, such the organization of the nervous system, that a sound mind, healthy in all its functions, is seldom found out of a sound and equally healthy body. Seldom indeed, is the energy of a William of Orange, or a

Nelson, or a St. Arnaud, associated with a feeble and debilitated frame. Here and there occurs a notable exception to the general rule of humanity, but it is such an exception as proves the rule.

It is therefore a primary axiom in education that the physical well-being of the young should receive due attention. To parents and instructors this truth seems a truism. To the young it frequently requires to be recommended, on account of the want of prudence, and heedlessness of consequences which they often exhibit, especially when habits of self-indulgence and indolence are formed, when the pleasures of maturer age are anticipated, and when actions which we know to be contrary to the will of God are palliated by example and thoughtlessly indulged in. Such are not the habits which make the human body meet to be the Temple of the Holy Ghost, but habits of regularity, self-restraint, and moderate exercise, by which a mastery is acquired over the lower appetites, and a foundation of vigorous strength is laid.

II. Let us now regard the child Jesus growing in wisdom. We may assume that, whatever His age was, His wisdom corresponded to that age. There is a prescient wisdom, sometimes found in early years, which gives way to and is succeeded by the maturer wisdom of the man, just as that in its turn passes into the grave and retrospective wisdom of the elder. Jesus increased in growth, and in that wisdom which suited His years. Knowledge, doubtless, He possessed in a remarkable degree; but it was rather the wise and understanding

heart which distinguished Him from other children. Knowledge is desirable, and necessary, as the basis for reflection. But a man may have "all knowledge," and still be as far from possessing true wisdom, as the Apostle Paul tells us he may be from possessing charity. Men whose lives are spent in the acquisition of knowledge, how far removed from wisdom are they! How little influence they produce on others by the mere fact of their possessing great stores of knowledge. So far from knowledge being wisdom, it may be asserted that great knowledge has a tendency to make men forget the real ends of life, and to lose themselves in visionary dreams or profitless speculations. Neither is talent identical with wisdom. The present age is productive of much talent, abundant cleverness, quickness of insight, practical shrewdness, and capacity for business. But much of this is very superficial. The habits of competition, and the restless activity of the world in which we live, are more favourable to the production of a showy, demonstrative, self-asserting cleverness, than to the formation of solid wisdom. Such wisdom is not gained by storing the memory with other people's ideas, or by imitating the sayings of professed wits, or by indulging the fancy, or by giving reins to the imagination. It consists of self-control more than in the acquisition of knowledge; it deals with the realities of life, and not with the external vestments of the age; it scorns not humble men, nor humble topics of thought; it bears in mind the due relations of things to each other in time and in eternity; above all, it delights in

meditating on the works of God, and on those subjects which the human soul appropriates to itself as its congenial food, stamped with the impress of immortality, and leavening the subjects of the day.

If such be the nature of true wisdom, it is not wonderful that few men attain to it. Wisdom issuing out of knowledge, and sanctifying talent, is a gift of no ordinary quality, an acquisition not to be made in a day. So far as it is to be acquired, it implies much reflection, much self-restraint, great humility, joined with great moral courage, and a firm resolution to act in all cases upon conviction. But wisdom in its germ is the gift of God. He requires us to exercise it, and not to treat it like the talent of the unprofitable servant, as a thing to be hoarded, and kept from all contact with the world. Though experience of life will not give wisdom; though repeated attempts to engage in matters which are too high for us may only show our weakness and inconsiderateness, and produce repeated failures; yet we shall not learn wisdom without intercourse with others, with the men of thought and action combined, who do the work of their generation, and stamp upon the age its form and feature.

Jesus is represented to us, in the sacred narrative, not only as receiving wisdom from above, but as acquiring wisdom by communication with others. To the inquiring mind many thoughts suggest themselves, and are suggested in the course of conversation with ordinary men. We have heard to-day how Jesus occupied Himself in the Temple, both hearing the doctors and asking

them questions. Doubtless, as it has been well said, He learnt more from them, though they were His inferiors, than they from Him. The habit of seeing through the external veil of things, and piercing to the very heart and marrow, which issued afterwards in the Sermon on the Mount, did not belong to the Jewish teachers. But Jesus acquired it, not without intercourse with them. He heard their interpretations of Scripture; He made Himself familiar with their manner of exposition; He listened to whatever traditional lore they had to impart; but when He came forth as a Teacher Himself, He discarded as unprofitable the mass of Rabbinical knowledge upon which the inquiring minds among the Jews had starved for centuries, and He fed the multitudes with a more soul-satisfying food, even the essence of God's truth. Observe that in this development of Jesus there was nothing like forcing, no hurry or impatience, no attempt either to produce a sensation, or to impress His brethren and neighbours with an idea of His extraordinary powers. Indeed, we have no Scriptural ground for asserting that before His baptism, and the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Him, Jesus, whether in His childhood, youth, or manhood, had any power of working miracles, or anything which distinguished Him from persons of His own age. His brethren, we are told expressly, believed not on Him. Had He wrought miracles before His ministry began, this could hardly have been the case. However, on a point where Scripture is silent, it does not become us to make dogmatic statements.

Part of the credit won by those who attain to the possession of wisdom is due to their parents, or those whose duty it is to watch the unfolding of their character. The Christian parent and instructor should not try to precipitate the growth of wisdom, but rather watch and pray that the germ may be implanted in the young breast; they ought not to be desirous of meddling in the dealings between God and the young believer's soul, but make allowance for fits of absence, for an abstracted dreamy manner, for dislike to society, and other peculiarities which not unfrequently mark the first stages of the Christian life. These, if not checked, may, by God's grace, give way to a more enlarged perception of the sphere of duty, and society will no longer be shunned, nor domestic duties regarded as burthensome; but if they are checked, and if mistaken kindness lead the friends and advisers of the young to desire them to be more cheerful, to enter more freely into the amusements and enjoyments of society, irreparable mischief is often done, and the seeds of spiritual life are smothered within the soul, never to spring up again in their pristine beauty and vigour. Mary, in her attitude of watchful care, is a true type of what a Christian mother should be. She was not ignorant of the Divine origin of the Child whom she had borne; and it was with humble dependence on the Divine arm, and in the spirit of adoring love and wonder, that she watched, without stimulating, the growth of Jesus in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

III. We see the child Jesus increasing in favour with

men, all, that is, who came into communication with Him—with the visitors at His reputed father's house with all who came there on matters of business, with His companions in the periodical journeys to Jerusalem, and with the strangers whom He met in the holy city.

The favour of men is a test of certain qualities without which no Christian character can lay claim even to relative perfection. No selfish, or ill-tempered, or peevish, or morose, or arrogant, or deceitful person can ever secure the favour even of relatives, much less that of any mixed society. A desire to please, a readiness to oblige others, a willingness to listen to advice or even reproof from older persons, these are qualities very often found in the young, and always regarded with favour as marks of an amiable disposition. So far we may be justified in assuming that the favour of God coincides in its objects with that of man. But many other qualities are valued in society, and procure a certain distinction for their possessors, which cannot be looked upon as in any way pleasing to God. In an artificial state of society the constituent elements of true worth are apt to be overlooked, whilst favour is accorded to external accomplishments, or other qualities which a pretentious habit of self-assertion may enable the possessor to make the most of, whilst he has tact enough to avoid showing his shallowness.

From such a picture we turn with delight to that of the child Jesus, commending Himself to all who knew Him by every amiable and lovely quality, and

growing up like some tender plant in the quiet vale of existence.[1]

IV. And we are called upon to regard Him as increasing in favour with His Heavenly Father. This is a sure concomitant of spiritual growth. The world may lack discernment, and may not appreciate the higher qualities which furnish the man of God; but the Lord knoweth them that are His; and in the person of His only-begotten Son, who was the express image of Himself, the Father discerned every nascent bud, and every unfolding germ of spiritual life, and behold, it was very good. How could it be otherwise? we ask. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ could not but love His Son more dearly than all created beings. But we have to contemplate the child Jesus, not as possessing at once the full favour of God, but as increasing in favour with Him. This shows the Saviour to be one of us. This marks His life on earth as progressive, passing through successive stages, each perfect of its kind, but one kind of perfection being higher than another. Here, doubtless, the language of the sacred penman is adapted to human capacities and modes of conception. We are in the habit of regarding the man as superior to the child; but we must remember that He, whose childhood we are considering, has declared that of little children, and of childlike spirits, the kingdom of heaven consists.

We have no ground for assuming any superiority to the young but that which the possession of true

[1] Robertson's Sermons. Second Series. Serm. xv.

wisdom gives. Growth, which was characteristic of Jesus in His childhood, should characterise us through life. There is a wisdom belonging to the morning of life, as there is a wisdom belonging to its noonday, and its evening. Let us be content to be wise according to our generation, neither prematurely sapient, nor frivolous in old age. Again, in our spiritual life, there should be a constant progress. We must not hope to anticipate the results of many years' experience, but must be content, first to be babes in Christ, then children, then young men, finally elders.

Before I conclude, let me add a few words of special application to this congregation. The habitual sight of so many young people increasing in stature, and engaged in various studies, pursuits, and amusements, frequently suggests the thought—Are they growing in wisdom? True wisdom, we have seen, is a plant of heavenly origin, but requiring human cultivation. Does such wisdom exist in you? Is it on the increase? God knoweth. We can judge with more or less accuracy of the advance you are making in the studies of the place. We can test the amount of diligent application which you bestow upon them; we can estimate the capacities which you show for acquiring knowledge; but of the wisdom that is in you we can, except in a few instances—those which come under our immediate observation—form but a slight, and, it may be, erroneous judgment. Ask yourselves, therefore, whether you are seeking wisdom, and whether your search after it has been in any degree effectual; and answer your question

honestly, in the court of your conscience, as a truthful witness in the presence of an All-wise and All-seeing Judge. Pray to Him to increase your wisdom, remembering that, in this matter, though one may plant and another water, it is God that giveth the increase. Seek from Him that inward strength, without which no wisdom can exist. And be contented with such a measure of wisdom as befits your years. The eye of God, depend upon it, rests with as much pleasure on your boyish wisdom as on that of the mature philosopher, or aged statesman.

Again, are you growing in favour with God and man? Popularity at school is valuable so far, that it shows amiability, a generous unselfish disposition, honesty, and other excellent qualities, to exist. But popularity is often owing to merely external qualities, sometimes to excellence in athletic games, sometimes to a faculty of amusing and entertaining others, perhaps not in the wisest way. And, on the other hand, faults of manner, shyness, and the like, produce unpopularity. Boys must have changed very much from what they were twenty-five years ago if a reputation for talent, joined with idleness, is not more valued by them than a character for patient, plodding industry. Yet of the two the latter is, beyond all question, the most deserving of approbation. Your standard of excellence is therefore imperfect; and far be it from us to say that ours is perfect. Experience we have: the desire to do justice to you we have: but we cannot tell what temptations you may be called upon to endure, and, therefore, can-

not estimate the value of your resistance to evil: nor have we the opportunity of seeing your better qualities called into exercise, so that we cannot be *assured* of your possessing those social virtues and Christian graces which we hope you have.

Therefore we fall back upon the question, "Are you increasing in favour with God?" We know to whom He extends His favour—to those who love Him, and keep His commandments. How many such are there among you? Again, I refer you to your own consciences. Ask yourselves, not after the manner of dissemblers, but in all sober earnestness, whether you are really advancing in the love of God and obedience to Him. If not, O bethink yourselves of the utter inadequacy of human favour to help you to escape eternal punishment and to secure eternal happiness! Think, too, of the powerful efficacy of the grace of God, who can change your hearts and put a new spirit within you. Think also of His love to you, in giving His only-begotten Son to be an example to you of growth in godliness; and take courage from the assurance that He who bestowed such a gift upon lost sinners shall, with Him also (in answer to your prayers), freely give you all things.

[*Feb.* 19, 1860.]

XXII.

THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

A SERMON FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

"*When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost.*"—JOHN XIX. 30.

THE services of to-day have already brought before us the most prominent event in the history of God's dealings with man—the death of His Son for the sins of the world.

I propose for our consideration this morning, the record of that event by the beloved disciple, who was an eye-witness of the crucifixion, and who, after taking the mother of his Lord to his own home, had probably returned to the foot of the cross in time to be present at the closing scene, and to hear those words—so full of meaning—uttered by the lips of the Saviour, "It is finished."

If we compare the other records with that of St. John, we find a difference in the last words attributed to the crucified Saviour. In St. Matthew and St. Mark it is merely recorded that Jesus cried with a loud voice, without the words being specified. In St. Luke (xxiii. 46) we read, "When Jesus had cried with a loud voice,

He said, Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, He gave up the ghost."

That there should be this variation appears to us very natural, when we consider that each of the Evangelists wrote upon independent testimony. St. Matthew giving, probably, the circumstances which he recollected from having been present, or near the spot—St. Mark the account of Peter—St. Luke that of Paul—whilst St. John, as we have seen, gave in all likelihood the evidence of his own observation, or that of the women who remained at the foot of the cross.

Now, there is no discrepancy between the accounts of St. Matthew and St. Mark on the one hand, and those of the other Evangelists on the other; for the general description of the two former applies to the details furnished by the two latter. We have, therefore, only these to consider.

There can be no doubt that both accounts are correct; but there may be a doubt entertained which of the two sayings was uttered first. It seems probable, on two grounds, that the words "It is finished," preserved by St. John, preceded those which St. Luke has recorded, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

(1) Because St. Luke's account was derived from St. Paul, who received the latest revelation from the Lord Jesus.

(2) Because, on this supposition, the sense is better; for it is more natural to imagine the Saviour announcing first, in His character of human prophet, that His work was finished, and then, in His character of Son of God,

commending His spirit to His heavenly Father, than the contrary.

Assuming this as proved, and remarking, by the way, that there is nothing in the statement of either Evangelist which prevents our harmonizing them as above—for neither of them expressly states, "These were the last words of Jesus," though St. Luke's narrative seems to imply it—let us examine the context, in order that we may consider the words of the text in their due relation to the rest of the narrative.

Jesus, we read, "knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst;" upon which a sponge filled with vinegar—the sour wine used by the Roman soldiers—was applied to His mouth. The reference to Scripture is, doubtless, to the sixty-ninth Psalm, "When I was thirsty, they gave me vinegar to drink." It seems almost strange that the course of the narrative of so august an event should be broken by an incident apparently so insignificant. But we must consider who the sacred writer was. It was David, who was a type of Christ in many things. Some of his utterances were fulfilled in his own person, and others in the person of Christ. But David was the channel of inspiration, and not the fountain. The Psalms are quoted by our Lord, and therefore the bearing of several of the prophetic passages is established beyond a doubt. They are to be looked upon, therefore, as a part of God's record of His Son—God's Holy Spirit speaking by the mouth of David. And as there must always be the most exact correspondence between God's

words and works, it is natural that the one should have reference to the other. Thus much for the general principle.

As regards the particular incident, it may be said that it is important as showing that the Messiah of prophecy was to be a *suffering* Messiah—not a triumphant one. The Jews, therefore, had no Scripture warranty for stumbling as they did, or for refusing to accept Jesus, because He did not raise a national standard, and restore again the kingdom to Israel. Every portion of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament had a distinct reference to the work, or office, or personal character of Christ. Sometimes they exhibited Him as a Wonderful Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace; sometimes as the Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief—as in Isaiah liii. and in the Psalm above quoted (lxix.). On the whole, the character of Jesus, as well as His manner of life and death, was fully shadowed forth; and He who had inspired the sacred penman thought it expedient in His last agony to confirm by His actions the truth of the word of prophecy.

Jesus, therefore, having received the vinegar, said, "It is finished." Not only His life, but His work was finished. All was finished that He came on earth to perform.

A virgin had conceived and borne a Son; to whom John, the successor of Elias, had borne witness. A prophet like Moses had arisen, even a root of Jesse, which should stand for an ensign of the people; one

upon whom the Spirit of the Lord had rested ; who had given sight to the blind and strength to the lame, who had raised the dead, and preached the Gospel to the poor. Every portion of the Holy Land had witnessed His miracles and self-denying ministry, yet He was despised and rejected of men. He had borne our griefs and carried our sorrows ; He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities. Every ignominy that had been foretold had been endured by the Son of God : after coming to His own, in the very attitude which had been predicted—meek, and sitting upon an ass—He had been by them rejected ; and preference had been given to a robber and murderer. Now He had swallowed up death in victory, but at the price of His own life. In short, *all prophecy had been fulfilled* which related to the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross.

Every type also had been fulfilled which had reference to the same event in its different aspects.

Jesus was the true Scape-goat—the Bearer of the sins of all the people. He was the Paschal Lamb, whose blood, sprinkled upon the doors of His people's lips, should purify their hearts, and keep off the visit of the destroyer. He was the Child of Promise, who voluntarily offered Himself for sacrifice on Mount Moriah, in obedience to His Father's will. And in His crucifixion was fulfilled the meaning of the brazen serpent, which healed all who looked towards it, and drew all men to it.

Moreover, *He had been partaker of all the ills of humanity*—of some of its joys, too.

He took not upon Him the nature of angels, but of men. As a son of Abraham He was born, and learned obedience first to His reputed earthly parents. As waiting the call of God—the times and the seasons of His heavenly Father—He abode in obscurity till the time came for Him to show Himself; and then He entered upon His appointed ministry; He endured hunger and thirst; He wandered about without any settled habitation; He was rejected, and that by His own countrymen, and His brethren, who recognised Him only as "the carpenter's son." All these earthly trials were now over. Likewise the few joys which had gladdened His existence were over—the reunions at the house of Mary and Martha on the occasion of the great Jewish feasts; the brief triumph which He had condescended to accept on entering Jerusalem—that, too, was past and gone. The voices that had made the air ring with shouts of Hosanna on the slopes of Mount Olivet were now hoarse with crying, "Away with Him, crucify Him."

But Jesus had connected the past with the future. *He had founded His Church* by preaching the Gospel, and testifying to its truth by miracles; by teaching His disciples to pray, and generally by instructing them in the doctrines of Christianity; and lastly, by the appointment of the twelve Apostles, and the promise of the Holy Ghost. This work was therefore accomplished, and only needed the seal of His death and resurrection.

Lastly, the *sufferings of the last twenty-four hours were finished.*

He had passed through the agony in the garden,

those hours of bitter trial, when His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. He had been betrayed by Judas, and deserted by the eleven. He had submitted to the unjust abuse of the civil and ecclesiastical power, by Pontius Pilate and Caiaphas. He had endured the contradiction of sinners, had been brought into close contact with sin, and had borne the guilt of an accumulated weight of sin of which He was Himself innocent. He had worn the crown of thorns and the purple robe, the mock emblems of earthly sovereignty; and then had gone forth on the ascent to Calvary, till His fainting form sank under the weight of the cross. There He had endured the tortures of a death, with which for cruelty no other can be compared; and amidst all the agonies which He then experienced, He was exposed to the taunts of the very malefactors who were crucified with Him. All this was finished, and Jesus proclaimed it aloud, in the midst of that sepulchral gloom which shrouded the cross on which He hung.

Though the Jews who gazed upon the spectacle were ignorant of what they had done, and the Roman soldiers regarded it as the execution of an ordinary criminal, He who hung upon that cross had been partaker of the counsels of the Father from the beginning. And He had inspired the prophets, who knew what should be the manner of His sufferings. Therefore He knew when they were completed. He could say, "It is finished," knowing that every particular which was designed of old by God for the redemption of man had been accomplished; that, as a Son, He had shown per-

fect obedience to His Father's will; that, as a Man, he had endured all that human weakness entails upon men and women; that, as an offering for sin, He had satisfied the conditions required by the Almighty for the reception again into favour of the disobedient children of Adam; and that, as Son of David, He had striven to the uttermost to touch the hearts and influence the faith of the Israelites, but in vain, since they "would not." He knew, moreover, that the power of Satan was cast down, and that the time was come when, left to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the small community whom He had chosen out of the world, and who were to be heirs of those privileges of which the Jewish nation showed themselves unworthy and unmindful, would be able to carry on their Master's work, and go on with the task assigned to them, of making disciples of all nations, and admitting them through the door of baptism, administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, into the true sheep-fold, the general assembly of the faithful on earth.

All this Jesus, as Son of God and Son of Man, knew; and, therefore, He could say, "It is finished."

Here let us pause a while to *contemplate the finished work of Christ.*

Let us view it as *an act of condescension.* He who suffered was God, eternally pure and sinless; and yet He deigned to be classed with murderers, and to die the death of the lowest malefactors. He who had basked in the unclouded sunshine of the Father's love from the beginning was now exposed to the hate and

bitter malice of His enemies, whom, nevertheless, He desired to save, and for whose forgiveness He prayed. Refusing the aid of those countless legions of angels who were ready to execute His bidding, and sweep His murderers from the earth, He drained the cup of trembling to the very dregs, and not till then exclaimed, "It is finished."

Again, let us regard it as *an act of love*. And here we remark that it is wholly different from merely human affection, which is seldom bestowed without some return of affection, or, at least, the manifestation of some qualities which engender love. But in this case we are met by the astounding fact, that, whereas sin is of all things most hateful to God, Christ died for us while we were yet sinners.

You, who think so little about God or Christ; who pass from hour to hour and day to day without a single thought about Him who died for you—such as, I fear, there are too many among you—you were included in the scheme of redemption, which was designed from all eternity in the everlasting purposes of the Father. Long before you attained to any intellectual or moral perception, even before your limbs were formed, your souls were numbered among the living, and your lot was marked out among those who might be heirs of immortality. Can it be said that God saw in you any especial fitness—any meritorious qualifications which would entitle you to heaven? No. God knew that you would share in the corrupt nature of the old Adam. He loved you while you were yet sinners. What then?

are you to go on and persevere in your sinful paths? God forbid. That would be to jeopardise your eternal salvation. That would be to crucify the Son of God afresh, and put Him to open shame; that would be to count the blood of the covenant, by which you *should* be sanctified, an unholy thing; and in that case, you must remain still far from God—still strangers to Christ.

O, bethink yourselves for a moment of the grandeur of the conception which is placed before you—of the universality of the plan of redemption through Christ! Think of the infinite mercy of your God, and of His desire to include all, not only among *the redeemed*, but among *those who are saved*. Let not a scheme of such vast comprehensiveness, such sovereign love, be marred through *you*. Others may reject the offer of salvation, but do not *you*.

Lastly, view the finished work of Christ *as an example*.

He endured the cross for you. He requires you to take up your cross and follow Him. Have you no finished work to look back upon with contentment? None as yet. But have you not begun any work? Is Christ not forming within you?

It is a mysterious process, that new birth of the soul.

We know not how the bones of the infant grow within the womb, passing through various types and assuming different forms, until the perfect child is brought to light. Nor do we know all the subtle processes of assimilation, by which the growing child, immediately upon its being born into the world, takes up the various elements of nourishment from the air

which it breathes, and the food which it consumes, until it grows to the stature of a man. Yet we doubt not the daily evidence of our senses that these processes are continually going on.

There is an analogous process in the soul. There is a conception—an embryo of new life—the first dawning of light amid the darkness. At first the light is dim, and the existence of the new-born spiritual being is scarce perceptible: but by-and-by it begins to be more clearly felt. It is assailed by diseases and accidents which threaten annihilation: but nevertheless it is preserved. The spiritual process goes on. We begin to know it by its fruits. The spiritual *child* is very different from the spiritual *man;* but so it was with Jesus. His work had a beginning. He who exhibited that wondrous specimen of a Son's obedience upon the Mount of Calvary first learned obedience as a Son in the abode of His earthly parents. The small, but not less difficult, sacrifices of inclination to duty, the struggles to repress the desires of gratifying self—these, or something analogous to these, and not incompatible with a sinless nature, were undergone by Jesus. Little by little the divine Child increased in that wisdom and spiritual stature which culminated in His manhood. O that we could see you taking Christ as your example in the beginning of His work! O that I might this day say of you, "Of Him," (that is, of the Father), "are ye in Jesus Christ, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."[1]

[1] 1 Cor. i. 30.

The operations of the Spirit of God are not uniform, but I believe that in most cases of true conversion there is at some time a sense of pain—a feeling of estrangement from God; a doubt whether He has not forsaken the believer in Him: sometimes weariness and faintness; sometimes sharp agony of spirit; at times darkness like that which came over the land when the Son of God was crucified. At such times let the remembrance of what Christ suffered for you cheer you and revive you: even after all that He endured, the end came, and He knew it. He was able to say, "It is finished." Blessed are they who can say of their spiritual warfare, "It is finished"—when the darkness clears away from their soul, and the sun of righteousness shines with the unshorn beams of His brightness into their hearts! This may not be until the last grains of sand are ebbing away in their glass of life. Nevertheless, blessed are they if it comes then—the spirit of assured hope and sense of forgiveness—that earnest to the redeemed soul of everlasting salvation. Blessed still more are they if it comes earlier: for then they will have the consolation of thinking that they will have Jesus for their friend through life; and that, as they have found reconciliation through Him at the foot of the cross, they will wear with Him a crown of glory in His kingdom in heaven.

On this day prayer is offered up in all our churches for all Jews, Turks, infidels, and heretics—that they may be converted and saved among the remnant of true Israelites. It is a truly Christian act, and God be thanked that we are entitled to join in it.

Let us further pray that the work of the Spirit may be shown in the breaking down of barriers which obstruct the growth of Christ's spiritual kingdom in this our land, that the word of God may have free course and be glorified; and that the prophecy may be fulfilled in our time, "And they shall all know Me, from the least to the greatest; for the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

As yet we seem far from that end. As yet only the dawn of light is seen upon the distant mountain tops, and clouds of unbelief render dim the nearer prospect which the full light of divine love and truth ought to illumine. Pray for more faith, more love towards God, more hope in Christ. Pray that the sun may not go down upon your unbelief, but that God may by His Holy Spirit purge away the mists of darkness from your eyes, that you may see Him now by the eye of faith, and afterwards behold Him as He is. Pray that on this day your spiritual gaze may be directed with such intensity and earnestness towards the form of your crucified Redeemer, that you may bear away indelibly impressed upon your heart His adorable image, and from the darkness that shrouded His person on the Mount of Calvary you may be enabled to look away with eagle glance towards the empyreal regions of heaven, where He sits in glory, a Prince and a Conqueror, mighty to save!

[*Good Friday*, 1860.]

XXIII.

ON THE RESURRECTION.

A SERMON FOR EASTER DAY.

"*That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection.*"
PHIL. III. 10.

THE resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ is a glorious sequel to the events of His life and death. It gave certainty to what before was only a matter of faith, and established on the basis of undoubted fact the claim of Jesus to be the Son of God with power.

It was so felt by the apostles. Had their crucified Master been nothing more than a self-devoted and holy man, however dear to *them* His memory would have been, His death would have been counted by the world for nothing more than the necessary extinction by force of a religious enthusiast, whose opinions brought Him into collision with the civil and ecclesiastical authorities then constituted. Such instances have been common enough in the world's history. But of no one, save Jesus Christ, could it be said, "He submitted to death, and raised Himself from the dead." This mere fact placed the Founder of Christianity on a different ground to the founders of all sects of philosophy or religion that the world had known. The apostles felt

the importance of their Lord's resurrection. They recognised in this one act the truth and power of Jesus. And they were aware of its value as a basis on which to raise the structure of the new religion. They acted upon this conviction on the first occasion when they were called upon to do anything in a corporate capacity. When the place of the apostate Judas was to be filled up, Peter invited the ten to ordain one of those who had been with Jesus from His baptism to be a witness with them of His resurrection.

The most prominent subject in the discourse of Peter, which was followed by the conversion of 3,000 souls, was the resurrection of Jesus, as foretold by David, and as witnessed by the twelve. Again, in Solomon's porch, before the council at Jerusalem, and at Cæsarea, Peter enlarged upon the same subject; and it is among the earliest recorded facts of his brethren that "with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and great grace was upon them all" (Acts iv. 33).

And in like manner Paul, who had not known Jesus when He was in the flesh, yet had beheld Him in His glory, testified of the resurrection at Antioch, at Athens, at Jerusalem, before the council of the priests, and at Cæsarea, before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa in succession; and in his epistles to the Christian Churches at Rome, Corinth, Philippi, Thessalonia, Ephesus, and Colossæ, and in the last of his acknowledged epistles, the second to Timothy, he dwelt at greater or less length, but always with great weight, upon the same event. Of

so great importance did the fact of our Lord's resurrection appear to those two great apostles, to whom were severally committed the ministry of the Word to Jew and Gentile.

If other topics were brought forward more prominently in the later epistles, it was because the Churches were already built upon a secure foundation, and needed advice, encouragement, teaching, exhortation, or rebuke, on matters which belong to a more advanced state than that infancy which is described in the earlier chapters of the Acts of the Apostles.

Thirty years after the event which we are commemorating on this day, St. Paul could say that his chief ambition and aim was, that he might know Christ, and the power of His resurrection . . . if by any means he might attain to the resurrection of the dead. And if that eminent saint and apostle could so sum up his wishes and aims, those who have come after him, following at a mighty interval, dwarfish in spiritual stature as compared with him, may well ask themselves if they feel the great importance of Christ's resurrection.

To the mass of mankind living at that time it was absolutely unknown. By the greater number of those who were cognisant of it, it was little if at all regarded. The Jews failed to perceive that the rising again of Jesus, whom they had crucified, was the very keystone of that arch of prophecy and type and symbolic ordinance which spanned the broad river of their national life—binding together the present and the past, and

uniting by that which should have cemented the shattered fabric of national faith those who had been severed by long periods of unbelief and idolatry. The Romans, if they were informed—as probably Tiberius was—of an event which had occurred in a remote and little known province, were not likely to attach more importance to it than to any other of those frequently occurring events, the insurrection of a national leader nipped in the bud, and punished by his ignominious death.

Yet this indifference did not in the least diminish the value and importance of the resurrection of our Lord. Viewing it merely as a fact in the history of the world, it proved to demonstration that the laws by which life and death were regulated depended on the will of a Supreme Being, who could suspend and alter them by a mere act of volition. This did away with all idea of blind necessity by which the Greeks asserted the will of their gods to be controlled, as well as that of Law being superior to the fiat of the Lawgiver.

The latter notion might have been overthrown by a less miracle. Any well-authenticated instance of the ordinary laws of nature being reversed proves the existence of a cause superior to those laws; and when this reversal has been foretold by a rational being, such Providence argues a higher knowledge than that which ordinary men possess. A Thales may foretell an eclipse by reason of his greater experimental knowledge; but to say that the shadow shall go back on a monarch's dial, or that the sun and moon shall stand still in the heavens till the enemies of Israel have been

smitten, argues a correspondence and communication with One who is greater than sun and moon, and who shows His power no less by the suspension than by maintenance of the laws which He has assigned to the objects of the material universe.

II. The evidence on which we receive the fact of our Lord's resurrection from the dead is abundant. Besides that of the four Evangelists, we have the testimony of Peter and Paul, the latter of whom asserted, at a time when contradiction would have been easy had the assertion been unfounded, that Jesus was seen after His resurrection by above five hundred brethren at once. And if the testimony of friends be deemed insufficient, we have that of enemies; for the Roman soldiers who were set to watch by the sepulchre reported to the High Priests the fact of Jesus having burst the barriers of the tomb. The received opinion has been propagated, as we all know, in spite of the strongest opposition, and in the face of imminent peril—in some cases, of certain death. Yet the early Christians shrank not from the utterance of the truth, and embraced martyrdom with a full conviction that He to whose resurrection they bore testimony was Lord of life and death, and was able to make them partakers in His victory over the grave.

III. To us the doctrine of the Resurrection has no less import than it had to the early Christians. For although we are not called upon to bring it forward perpetually to vindicate the character of our dear Redeemer from the charge of being a mere man, an impostor, who, being unable to fulfil His promises and professions,

threw away His life in despair: though all the objections made against Christianity on such and similar grounds have been met and refuted again and again, yet we find exception taken in our time to the very idea of a miracle, on the ground that the laws of Nature are immutable; and therefore it becomes a duty to refer to the facts on which our Christianity is based—some of these, as the Incarnation and the Resurrection of our Lord, being confessedly miraculous, and intended by their very contradiction of human experience to establish the paramount and supernatural power of Deity. On these points we cannot be too particular in our endeavours to satisfy our minds. God has provided abundantly for the satisfying of our intellect, as well as for the quickening of our affections. In the sacred record regard seems to have been had to the honest doubts of a perplexed intellect, as well as to the electrical operation of Love and Faith. It was given not only to the warm-hearted and impulsive Peter, but to the inquiring and cautious Thomas, to "know Jesus and the power of His Resurrection." It is given to all who seek in the appointed way. Whatever be the calibre, or whatever the peculiar character and bent of their minds, they need not remain long without the possession of the vital truth, which is the stay of the Christian Church at this holy festival.

The Christian stands on a broad vantage ground as regards the future. Those dim yearnings after immortality which ancient sages felt, those convictions of the imperishable nature of mind, and of things honest, good,

and true, which brightened the speculations of the philosopher, and made the approach of death more endurable, have given place to an assurance and a certainty which no doubt can shake, nor fear diminish. The Christian can say in full assurance of faith, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that though after death worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh I shall see God."

How could mankind have endured to live on without such a conviction? we feel inclined to ask. The mass of men and women resembled a party of travellers set down by night on a commanding eminence in the midst of a beautiful and varied landscape. One or two more highly gifted with imagination than the rest may picture to themselves somewhat resembling the scene which lies beneath and around them, but the rest discern nothing but the blackness of darkness. And even those who imagine the appearance of nature are apt to be misled, especially if they have never travelled amid corresponding scenery. When the day dawns, and the dark wreaths of vapour that shroud the forms of mountains begin to glow with rosy light, and the mist that brooded over lake and river gradually rises and melts into air, and nature stands forth revealed in all her exuberance of life and complexity of form, and variety of colour, how poor by comparison do the mental visions of the benighted traveller appear—wanting in truth, in power, and manifold variety! Not less is the shortcoming when we contrast the speculations of Pythagoras and Socrates with the definite statement of

the Gospels. That immortality which monarchs vainly attempted to secure by building pyramids, and carving gigantic forms in the solid rock—a privilege of the very few, and those perhaps the most worthless of mankind—is held out as an undoubted birthright of every believer in Christ. What a glorious conclusion to many an unresolved doubt and many a crude speculation! What a subject for humble joy, and adoring contemplation! What a cause for gratitude and overflowing love! But to whom?

To those who live as if this world were our abiding place, without a thought reaching beyond the grave? No, not to them. To those who have never felt any anxiety, or even interest about the state of their soul, when they shall have passed the bourne from which they shall not return? No, not to them.

But to those who have used the light they have had, and longed for more. To those who are content to die to the things of time if so be that they may live to the things of eternity. To those who are spiritually buried with Christ, and whose ardent hope and desire is that they may live with Him. To them the Resurrection of Christ is fraught with considerations of great joy.

IV. The rising again of Christ from the tomb is closely linked in Scripture with two events.

The first is, His ascension to the right hand of God, where He is constantly employed as our Mediator and Intercessor. He who knows "the power of His Resurrection" will not lose sight of Jesus our great High Priest who has passed into the holy place, there to

offer and present our supplications before the throne of grace, and to plead the merits of His sacrifice offered up once for all upon the cross.

The second is, His coming again. As we are taught that Jesus rose from the dead, with flesh and bones, and all that pertains to the perfection of man's nature, so we are reminded that at the last great day He will come again in His glorious body to judge the world, and that it will not avail us in that day to plead ignorance or unbelief, seeing that the sound of the Gospel has gone forth into all lands, and all are invited to "come unto Him," who died and rose again, to the end that all who believe in Him should be assured of the life that awaits them after death has had its brief dominion over them.

Now both these events contribute to our forming a due conception of the power of Christ's resurrection. At the same time, our faith in them is materially strengthened by our knowledge of the facts, as they are recorded in Scripture, of Jesus rising again.

V. But it is time that we should seek, by the aid of God's holy Spirit, to apply to ourselves, and realize our interest in the great event which we commemorate to-day. The resurrection of Jesus Christ did not, as we have seen, affect the mass of the Jewish nation; still less the Romans, or any other of the historical nations of antiquity. The Greeks regarded the Gospel as foolishness, because it told them of a fact which was contrary to their experience—the rising again of one from the dead. The Jews stumbled at the cross of Christ. Their

national pride rebelled against the idea of their Messiah suffering an ignominious death. Their stubborn heart of unbelief refused to acknowledge Him whom they had seen nailed to the cross to be the "Resurrection and the life."

Both these forms of unbelief find their counterparts in the present day. We have instances of intellectual men denying the possibility of miracles. We have other instances of men who deny their necessity, and would explain them away. Should you ever meet with such adversaries of Revealed Truth you may fairly demand of them, "Do you believe in the Resurrection of our Lord, as it is set forth in Scripture and in the Articles of the Church of England?" That is a most stupendous miracle, and you cannot repudiate miracles without including that; nor can you repudiate the fact of our Lord's Resurrection, and call yourselves in any true sense of the word Christians. "If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain."

Others there are whose pride of heart refuses to allow them to die with Christ. They do not feel themselves to be sinners; they do not see the necessity of His atonement for sin; they are content to look afar off at the scene enacted at Calvary, without a sense of their being personally interested in it. And therefore they cannot take to themselves that faithful saying, "If we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him." Pride of heart, whether allied to scepticism, or springing from a self-satisfied morality, is alike destructive of a saving faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

I do not think that the younger portion of my hearers are liable to be classed under either of these categories, so much as under that of *carelessness.* But I do fear that a great many of you are utterly careless and heedless of the great event of to-day. You can enjoy your brief holiday of Easter, but have you any higher and holier thoughts about it? Have you in spirit followed your Lord to Calvary and to the tomb? Have you prayed that your sins might be laid upon Him who came to bear them, and save you from them? Have you resolved to forsake them, so that to you the words may be applied, "dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God?" To pass over great offences, Have you put away all idleness, all frivolity, all hypocrisy, and all deceit? Can you be trusted to do what you know to be your duty, not only when a master's eye is upon you, but when it is for a time removed? Are you above petty subterfuges and underhand ways of securing a coveted enjoyment, which you know to be contrary to the discipline of the school? If not, you have not yet attained to that high and chivalrous feeling of honour which should mark the Christian gentleman, even when he is at school. It would be a false assurance on the part of the preacher who would address you as "risen with Christ."

But if you have followed Him in His humiliation, deeply feeling the cause of it, and tremblingly alive to your great need of a Saviour and Redeemer; if you have sought to imbibe largely of that spirit which professedly *does*, and verily *ought* to actuate the whole

Christian Church at the Festival of Easter—the spirit of reverent joy and adoring gratitude; if you do in deed and in truth "seek those things which are above," striving to put away from you the leaven of sin and folly, and desiring the unleavened bread of holiness and godly wisdom; if your minds and hearts are occupied not only by thoughts of the Resurrection, but rather of Him who rose again, and thereby declared Himself to be "the Son of God with power;" if you feel a personal attraction to Him who is "the way, the truth, and the life," so that if He bids you soar higher in your aims, the answer of your hearts may be, "Lord! take me up with Thee into the region of truth and purity and love;" if you find in the contemplation of the Lord's Resurrection the resolution of intellectual doubts like those of Thomas, as well as comfort to your hearts like that which filled the disciples when they saw the Lord, and were glad; if, beloved, you recognise in these tests any faithful, though dim, portraiture of your own spiritual condition, rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for be assured that many prophets and kings have desired to see the things which ye have seen, yet have not beheld them.

VI. And now one question before I conclude. Are you about to show your love to Christ by joining in the Holy Communion of His Body and Blood? Surely none who have the opportunity should neglect so great a privilege, or neglect so obvious a duty at this season of Easter. May those who remain here unite in spirit with those who are away at this season, in the reverent and joyful participation in that sacred rite. Remember, that it was

on the first day of the week, on the day of His Resurrection, that Jesus made Himself known to His disciples in the breaking of bread. Take this as an encouragement to yourselves. Draw near to-day in full assurance of faith and in obedience to your Lord's commands. And may He reveal Himself to you, and open your hearts to understand the Scriptures, and fill you with the Spirit of His love and wisdom from on high, that you may know Him and the power of His Resurrection in this life present, and that finally you may attain to the resurrection of the just, through Him who died and rose again for us, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; unto whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be ascribed all might, power, dominion, and majesty, henceforth and for evermore. Amen.

[*Easter Day*, 1830.]

XXIV.

ON CHRISTIAN LIBERTY.

"Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."—JOHN VIII. 34—36.

No one can have studied the Word of God with attention, without remarking that warnings and encouragements, duties and privileges, the labour of the Christian pilgrim and the rest that awaits him, are set forth side by side. To enlarge on the wisdom of this would be needless—perhaps presumptuous. Let us thankfully accept the full and complete statement, made more striking by contrast, of all that we are required to do, and all that has been done for and promised to us. Let us never underrate the importance of duties, but, at the same time, let us give to our religion the complexion of joy which it seems intended should belong to it, by dwelling on our privileges as set forth in the Gospel.

The subject which the text invites us to consider, is the Christian's liberty. What more blessed privilege is there for which we have to praise the name of the Lord? What name suggests, whether by contrast

or by association, more stirring images or more ardent thoughts than that of *liberty?*

Let us first contrast a state of freedom with a state of bondage, the condition of the slave with that of the freeman.

The slave has no political, and can scarcely be said to have any social existence. He only exists, humanly speaking, for his master. He is bound to labour for him, with hand or brain, as the case may be. He may contribute to his master's comfort and ease; he may be a source of income to him, but he has no claim upon him. His master may sell him, may eject him, may punish him as he likes.

In the great Oriental monarchies of old the whole of the population, with the exception of a favoured few, was in a condition little better than that which has been described. In the highly civilized communities of Europe, the free States of Greece, the rights of citizenship were most jealously guarded; and a distinction was drawn between the inheritors by birth of full political privileges, and those to whom the protection but not the honours of the state were granted. In a still lower position were the slaves; they were frequently bought for large sums of money, trained in various accomplishments, and accustomed to produce for their master's benefit articles of luxury, and objects of refinement, from which themselves reaped no advantage. Even their hoardings were liable to be taken from them, as the winter store of the laborious bees is taken from them, and enjoyed by man with that proud

feeling of ownership with which he delights to appropriate to himself all the good things of the material creation, as if they existed for no end but the promotion of human happiness.

But why dwell on the condition of the slave in ancient times? Is that condition in any degree altered for the better now? Does he meet with more consideration in so-called Christian lands? and is he looked upon any more as belonging to the great human family, which recognises no distinctions of colour or feature, but only the broad fact of manhood? Alas! I fear not. The records of recent transactions on the coast of Africa, in Cuba, and in the United States of America, tell us that human nature has in this respect changed little, if at all, for the better; and that where our repressive measures have no force, the soul of the negro is ground down, fast bound in misery and iron. There exists on the part of slave-dealing nations the same recklessness of human ties, the same overweening arrogance, and disregard of the misery of thousands, which existed in old times; and the slave can no more call his life, I had almost said *his soul*, his own, than he could in one of the free republics of ancient Greece.

Yet, although slavery is so inhuman, the outward conduct of the slave is all that his master has power over. He may meditate revenge, or contrive plans for escaping, and rebel in spirit every hour of the day against the man who is assigned to him as a master. His spirit may be broken, crushed, robbed of half its valour, but not wholly absorbed into the existence and

will of his master. There is a slavery which goes even beyond political slavery: I mean the abandonment of the bodily and mental powers to the service of sin and Satan. "Whosoever committeth sin is a slave of sin." St. Paul says also, "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants (slaves) to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"[1] It was this thraldom that the Apostle felt when he exclaimed in the agony of an afflicted spirit, "Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"[2] And if the bond was felt so strongly by the Apostle, what, we are led to inquire, must it be to those who have not followed him in his rigorous self-discipline, "keeping under his body and bringing it into subjection," but who resign themselves to the wayward and fitful impulses of their own hearts?

Yet it is a fact of every day's experience, that whereas men are conscious of external slavery, they are unconscious of the slavery to sin of which we are speaking.

It was so with the Jews. They were not aware that they were in any spiritual bondage. "We are Abraham's seed," they said, "and were never in bondage to any man." I will not stop to comment on the extent of the delusion which they were under; but I will merely remind you that Judea was at this time a Roman province, and that the Jews were under a Roman governor, and, willingly or unwillingly, paid tribute to Cæsar. It

[1] Rom. vi. 16. [2] Rom. vii. 24.

is of another slavery that we are speaking. The Jews were slaves to a conventional standard of religion, which professed to be based upon the Mosaic law, but was in reality a perversion of that law. They were taught to believe that they might compound for the disregard of the moral law by a diligent observance of the ceremonial law; and their condition was, therefore, one of strong delusion—one in which they assumed the existence of things that were not, and practically denied the existence of things that were. Hence, while the righteous Apostle—who was not the slave of sin—spoke of himself as under bondage and death; the unrighteous Jews, who were the slaves of sin, asserted their freedom, and regarded their condition as one of life. And such delusions are not unexampled among us. Some of us may use the words of St. Paul, and talk of the struggle we are enduring, because we feel it; others, because we fancy we feel it; but, depend upon it that there are many who do not feel it, and who ridicule the very notion of any inward conflict being necessary. There will not be wanting those who will try to laugh you out of your manly efforts to overcome habits of sin, by denying the necessity of any such efforts. There will be tempters whose business it will be to make you as completely the slaves of sinful habits as themselves; and one means that they will employ will be the representing to you that the wages of sin are immediate satisfaction, to secure which they will not hesitate to lead you into conduct which must destroy your peace of mind, and make your life a spiritual death.

There is, perhaps, some faint shadow of a truth in what they assert. There is a state in which the bonds of sin are scarcely felt at all. It is so with the opium eater. For a time he flatters himself that he has found out the secret of happiness. He can at will produce a state of dreamy enjoyment, in which all sense of pain and sorrow vanishes, and delightful images in full succession present themselves to the mind. But after a few months or even weeks, he finds that he has submitted to a necessity which urges its claims more and more strongly the more they are gratified, until at last he has to choose between persistence in a habit which in course of time destroys all the mental and bodily faculties, and the abstinence from that which his morbid nervous system requires.

Illustrations of the same kind might be multiplied. A man drifting towards a cataract may shut his eyes, and imagine that the tranquil flow of the upper water has nothing in store but perpetual calm and peace. But for all this, the roar of the distant fall makes itself more and more distinctly heard, and two awful truths reveal themselves at once—that destruction is nigh at hand, and that there is no escape.

The stream of human life glides quietly on towards the unseen abyss of eternity. How unconsciously the mass of human beings are drifting onward to the bourne that separates between life and death! How unruffled is the surface of society! How smooth are conventionalities! How comfortably the sins of worldly men seem to lap them round!

Now and then occurs a sudden check. The death of a near friend or relative—the failure of some cherished scheme—a severe illness, or sudden accident, which brings before us the uncertainty of life and the nearness of death, any of these is sufficient to awaken the sinner to a sense of his real condition. When he turns his glance inward and arrives at the conviction—"I am in danger," and resolves to break off all connexion with sinful associates, and to abandon habits of sin, the first effort that he makes to extricate himself shows the strength of his bonds. Little head can be made at first against inveterate custom. It seems for a time as if the return to the right way was impossible. And Satan takes care to put every conceivable hindrance in the way, so as to discourage the endeavours to recover himself which the believer is making. Still the Christian must persevere, or he is lost. "The servant abideth not in the house for ever." His service ended, his usefulness gone, he is cast out, and the door is closed against him for ever. His taskmaster disowns him.

What a contrast there is between the condition of such a being and that of a son—the son of a father's love.

The son has more than a transient interest in his father's house. He has received an education, not that he may repay back with usury the sums expended on him. That is not what the father seeks. What he does seek is, that the son may support and maintain the honour of the house: that he may be a head and support to the family when his father is no more: that he may be an honoured and useful member of society: that he may

testify by his life to the truth of Christ's religion; and that he may die in the faith of Christ crucified, and in the hope of a joyful resurrection to immortal life. All this the father hopes. Hence the son *abideth.* He is not cast out for a temporary indiscretion, like the bondwoman and her son under the old patriarchal dispensation. He may have, or have had, his wayward hours. He may have grieved and vexed his father's spirit by his perversity; but so long as he returns—humble, affectionate, and repentant—he is met with forgiveness, and reinstated in his father's love.

There must be something essentially different in the natures of the spiritually free, and those who are in spiritual bondage, otherwise there would not be this great difference in their treatment. "The Son abideth ever;" where? we ask. The text says, "in the house." In the house of God; in His Church; in His earthly tabernacle, which is the image of a more enduring dwelling that shall be within the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem. This is where the Son abideth. In the world of sin he hath no abiding place. The events of the day pass before him as a dream. Life conveys with it no sense of permanence to him. He is spiritually awakened, and looks forward in heart and hope to another awakening in Christ's kingdom in heaven.

Besides possessing freedom Himself, the Son—God's Only-begotten Son—can confer freedom on His brethren by adoption. In old time the son had power to manumit slaves after years of faithful service; a custom which prevailed among the Romans, and which was

symbolized in the old Jewish law by the institution of voluntary service. If a slave would not be set free at the appointed time, his ear was bored through with an awl, and he was received into the house as one of the family. Christ deals with the believer after an analogous manner. When the repentant sinner turns to Him, and prays to be delivered from the yoke and bondage of sin, Jesus "opens the ears" of him who seeks to be admitted as one of His family and household, and He makes him free from sin. He incorporates the believer with Himself, and then, as a member of Christ's body, as a part of Him, the believer is free indeed. Jesus has broken the yoke of sin, and has won the gift of freedom—freedom for Himself, and freedom for all who are in Him.

Christian freedom, then, in one sense, is the gift of God to all who believe in Christ; a gift at once bestowed on all who flee in faith to Him; a gift which answers to the spiritual wants of the sinner convicted by God speaking in his conscience, and groaning under a bondage which is greater than he can bear. This freedom St. Paul speaks of constantly, not as the reward and effect of a course of obedience, but as the cause and reason why his converts should now at once rejoice in God, who has set them free in Christ, and should walk before Him as sons rather than servants. He speaks to His feeblest and most recent converts—the Galatians, for instance—of the day of perfect liberty which has now dawned for them. Our hearts, as well as Scripture, affirm that we cannot work with chains on; that the

true, happy, joyous, childlike service of the heart must be the fruit of liberty, even the "glorious liberty of the children of God." We must know ourselves to be released from the thraldom which the penalty hanging over us as sinners engenders; from the state which St. Paul describes, where those who were *not* justified and accounted righteous through Christ, were "in jeopardy every hour," and all their life long subject to bondage.

Besides this freedom which is set forth in Scripture as the immediate gift of the Son, bestowed on all who believe, on the condition of repentance and faith, there is a further manifestation of freedom which our Lord's words seem to promise to His obedient followers. "If ye *continue* in my words, then ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." This freedom is the consummation of happiness to the struggling believer: it is the victory for which he resolutely strives, and earnestly prays—freedom from the power and prevalence of his inborn and natural sinfulness, and also from those prejudices and perversions of truth which dim the spiritual perception of many who are sincere in their desire to do what is right.

But when may we look for such a gift to be bestowed? Not all at once; nor yet at such a distant period as to discourage us in seeking it. It is the aim and object, and heart's desire of the true Christian. He cries daily, "Give me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me by Thy *free Spirit*." And daily upheld by this free Spirit, he fights on; he labours in poverty of spirit, and at the same time in triumphant hope. He does nothing in his

own strength; he gives all glory to Christ. By faith he first entered the free country of God's adopted children; by faith he will at last enter that state where perfect love shall cast out fear, and perfect liberty shall efface the last relic of the elements of bondage.

This is the state which the Gospel holds out to you as attainable through faith in Christ. Praise be to God for His unspeakably precious gift! Freedom to those who are one in Christ; and a further freedom through the truth. The first is like an edict which proclaims emancipation to a nation of slaves; the second like that training—social and political—which renders those who are emancipated fit for the enjoyment of liberty. Go among a race of despot-ridden slaves, and proclaim freedom to them: they may accept the offer with joy, but they know not how to use the gift. In like manner, if the gospel of the free grace of God through Christ be preached to a people who are ground down under priestly domination, they may catch at the sound of liberty; but the memory of their chains will hang around them till the truth as it is in Christ has been apprehended by them spiritually and intellectually, and *then* they will be free.

The eyes of Europe are now directed to a noble effort made by a nation, after long years of endurance, to free itself from foreign bondage—from political and ecclesiastical fetters. I suppose there is no one amongst us—scarcely any one in England—who does not wish that God may prosper the righteous cause, and that a once free people may again occupy the soil of Italy and

Sicily. Yet every one of thoughtful mind must feel that there is much to be desired besides the overthrow of despotic power in those fairest regions of Southern Europe. When that is effected, there will remain the emancipation of a large portion of the entire population from the chains of sensuality, ignorance, and superstition. So much remains to be done in this way, that it has been a question with many, whether the Italians were fit for freedom. Let them answer the question themselves, as, it seems, they are likely to do; and then let those who know what is true liberty—the liberty of the soul and spirit—aid the endeavours of their struggling fellow-men to attain to the freedom of which the Word of God speaks.

We have turned our attention to a neighbouring country where a struggle for liberty has taken place, and is taking place. Amongst ourselves we cannot point to a corresponding struggle; for we have enjoyed for many years the blessings of constitutional liberty. And religious liberty, no less than civil freedom, is guaranteed to us by law. Yet the liberty of which the Apostle speaks is of another kind, and it is only partially developed amongst us. In order that we may have a personal claim to be allowed to aid in its further development, let us apply to ourselves a threefold scriptural test—

I. Are we free from the dominion of sin? It is one thing to sin, and another to be the slaves of sin. It is universally true that all men are sinners; but it is not

universally true that all men are the slaves of sin. God forbid!

The question is, Whom do we willingly and habitually obey? "for his servants we are to whom we obey." If we obey from the heart the law of God, beginning with the command to cast ourselves wholly upon His blessed Son, Jesus Christ, for salvation—if we obey *this* law, we are the servants of Him whose service is *perfect liberty*. We may commit sin, and shall commit sin, often, alas! but not habitually, not blindly and contentedly. Satan will dog our steps, watching his opportunity; sin will be as a thorn in our side—a hated enemy, rebelling, though subdued; bruising our heels though its head be crushed. The bitter consequences of sin committed in youth will follow us perhaps through life, and embitter our latest hours; but yet we are for ever and eternally free from it; free from its absolute power; free from its eternal penalty; from its curse; from its damning dominion. With a great price this freedom was purchased, even with the life of God's eternal Son.

Mistake not, by imagining that if you, obeying habitually the natural law of your own heart, following the bias of your inclinations, which lead you to amusement and frivolity, if not to sin, come under the condition of those who are the slaves of sin, you are, therefore, only partakers of a universal condition of humanity. It is not so. There are people in the world, who differ as widely from the natural servants of sin as light from darkness, as life from death; of them the

Apostle writes—they were the servants of sin, but he thanks God "that they have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to them, so that being now made free from sin, they are become the servants of righteousness;" they are entered into a state in which alone is continuance, for the end is everlasting life.

II. There is another test suggested by the text. "Do we feel that we have an abiding interest in God's house?" If so, then we are free. The earth is the immortal spirit's prison-house. Eagerly does it long to burst its bonds, and fly to its home. If we have any reasonable ground for looking upon heaven as our true home, we feel like emigrants who have secured a passage to some far-off land—when God wills, we are entitled to embark. But if we have no such confidence, then we cannot look upon ourselves as free—as emancipated from earth. The human spirit must have some resting-place, either an eternal one in heaven, or a temporary one on earth. And the shorter the space left for its earthly tenure, the more it clings to its frail abode. O, my brethren! strive to realize in your inmost hearts that eternal inheritance, which is in store for all who seek to win it in the appointed way. Boys! count not the amusements—the manly exercises—the society of friends—or even the sterner studies of school—a sufficient employment for *the soul.* If you *live for* the things of time, you must, to a certain degree, be *enslaved to* the things of time. Deem these as of little importance. Remember that, though young, you have immortal souls. Carry your aspirations beyond the grave. There you may

have human links—those whom you remember on earth as joined to you by ties of love—now passed into the presence of God, and of His angels; made perfect through the redemption of Christ. And assuredly there is One, who ought to be your nearest and dearest, as He is your truest and most constant friend, who is ever interceding for you, that you may have a part in that inheritance, a mansion in that house, which He has purchased for you by His blood.

III. Lastly, let us apply another test. "Do we know the truth?" That, we have seen, is to give the completion to our freedom, and is to fit us for the glorious liberty of the children of God. The slave, by long servitude, becomes slavish in nature; conversely, the Christian becomes like Him to whom he owes his freedom. We become assimilated to what we worship; the principle which we obey becomes part and parcel of our nature. Take this as a parting warning, and also as a parting encouragement. It is an awful thought, that by embracing the service of Satan, you become devilish in nature. Yet it is true, not only as a deduction of reason, but as a fact confirmed by observation. The chains of sinful habits eat into the heart of their victim more cruelly and fatally than the irons which enter into the flesh—aye, and *the soul*—of the prisoners in the dungeons of Naples. The tyranny of habits—not always grossly sinful, but weak, self-indulgent, self-deluding, and unworthy of the noble aspirations of youth—perverts the best and highest affections, debases the intellect, cramps, and narrows, and vitiates the whole

character. Would to God that you, who are under the dominion of such habits, could see for a moment, as God sees it, the perversity of your course, the danger you are in, and the actual loss of happiness which you incur! Were it so, you would assuredly seek the true way of emancipating yourselves from sin, and, also, from those secret allurements of the world, which do not repel by their moral deformity, but which charm by their seductiveness.

Take also this encouragement. If you resolve—earnestly resolve—to own no dominion but His, who said "My yoke is easy and my burthen light;" if you determine, by God's grace, to shake off the spirit of slumber, and to examine your actions by the light of God's written Word, and the help of His Holy Spirit; and if you pray from the depth of an honest heart that you may know Him who is the way, the truth, and the life; you will not long be left destitute of light, and life; but Christ shall give you light, and spiritual freedom, and joy and gladness for ever. In virtue of His finished work, you stand on a noble vantage-ground, from which you may survey the treacherous approaches of your enemy, and guard your own position. Beware lest you forfeit this. Avoid all familiarity with sin. Be honest with conscience, and conscience will continue to be honest and faithful with you. Flee youthful lusts. Avoid temptation, when you are not called upon decidedly to meet it; and when you are so called, withstand it in the power of Christ. Accustom yourselves to look upon all sin—even the smaller manifestations of

it—as ignoble, unworthy, poisonous and malicious in its effects; hateful to God, and grievous to Him from whom it drew prayers and groans, and an agonised bloody sweat, and that cry from the cross so heartbreaking and piercing that the material creation shook at the sound of it, and the rocks were rent, and the graves gave up their dead. Keep these things before your minds, and the worst of the struggle is over. Christ took upon Himself the form of a servant, not from any wayward caprice, but that you might have perfect liberty. He died, that He might be the author of life to as many as believe. He ascended up on high, that He might take possession of, and prepare to receive you into His kingdom—the kingdom of the cross, the kingdom of the brave and free, the kingdom of the faithful, the soul's true resting-place throughout the great Sabbath of eternity. May the sound of the archangel's trump, at which the graves shall open, convey to each one of us, beloved, an announcement that an abundant entrance is manifested to us into that immortal and glorious kingdom! May the Father receive us, as conformed to the image of Christ Jesus, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, into an "inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation!"

[*June* 10, 1860.]

XXV.

MY SON, GIVE ME THINE HEART.

"*My son, give me thine heart.*"—PROVERBS XXIII. 26.

IT is a very easy thing to write sermons and multiply discourses about what religion is not; but such addresses, when made to the young, are more apt to discourage than to instruct, to deter than to attract.

The text gives us, in the words of King Solomon, addressed to his son, the sum and substance of what religion is—regarding religion in its individual aspect, as the relation of the soul toward God.

Such a subject, if it could be brought clearly before you, would, I think, be of use; it would, by God's blessing, lead you to a great central truth, the possession of which could not fail to ensure your present and future happiness. For, if your heart is with God, it is difficult to conceive of your leading an ungodly life. You may be mistaken in your conduct at times; you may be surprised or ensnared by temptation; but of *this* unhappiness will be the result, and you will assuredly be led to seek, through the appointed means, the only source of true happiness—Reconciliation with God.

May His Holy Spirit be with us this day, that I may be enabled to set forth the meaning of the inspired Word, and that you may have grace given you to receive what shall be delivered agreeably to the same, to the strengthening and refreshing of your souls.

I propose first to consider the words of the text in their Divine, secondly in their human aspect—first, as uttered by God; secondly, as uttered by man.

I. Let us first consider the relationship to God which is conveyed in the text—"My son." Can any closer, any more endearing tie be suggested?

God, who might call upon us as His subjects, as the creatures of His hand, as His servants, bound to labour for Him and in obedience to His commands, addresses us as His sons. He speaks to us not in the voice of regal authority, but in that of fatherly affection.

Consider, for a moment, what is involved in the term Father.

(*a.*) God is the author of our being.

When we are in health and strength, when the thought of death is far removed from us, we are apt to value life but little. Yet, when our life is threatened by disease or danger, we show by the efforts we make to avoid destruction how high a value we attach to life. No exertion is considered excessive. No sacrifice is too great. "All that a man hath will he give in exchange for his life." The gift of life was deemed so great by the ancient Greeks and Romans, that, in the simpler and less corrupt periods of their respective histories, the

crime of parricide was deemed an impossibility. Even when circumstantial evidence testified strongly to a defendant's guilt, he was acquitted, because it was thought to be utterly against nature, and therefore impossible, that a son could lift up his hand against the earthly author of his life, to whom he owed it that he breathed the air of heaven.

And if we bear in mind the true meaning of life, this argument tells more strongly. Life is not this brief existence upon earth. This is but a temporary state or condition. That is the true life which is to last for ever, which will not be circumscribed by the boundaries of time and space, nor exposed to the manifold annoyances and vexations of earth, but which will introduce us to the society of saints and angels, and satisfy us with the presence of the living God.

All this is included in the gift of life. It is our own folly, our own blindness, if we reject it.

(*b.*) God not only bestows upon us life, but the means of enjoying it. He provides us with all that we want.

The analogy of earthly parents enables us in some measure to comprehend this. It is to them that we owe our earliest nurture, our protection during infancy, our food, our clothing, our education. All these are provided for us in the strictest sense.

A child knows not its wants. It has a few instincts —a craving for food, for warmth, for sleep. Its only language is a cry. What an utterly helpless condition! These wants must be, and are all anticipated. Were it not so, no child would arrive at maturity. Your parents'

love was shown to you before you saw the light, in all the preparations that were made for your helpless infancy. It is a light matter, then, that you should love them who first loved you. Were it not so, how ungrateful must your conduct appear!

But God loved you from *everlasting*. Before ever the world was made, He knew those whom He had chosen out of the world, those whom "He did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son."

How much greater is this far-reaching Providence of God than the purposes of the best and wisest of earthly fathers! The heir to an earthly throne is guarded with scrupulous care in childhood. As he advances towards maturity, he is brought more and more into contact with the people he is to rule. A kingdom is his heritage, and he is educated that he may be worthy of it.

You are heirs of immortality. For you a kingdom was prepared before the foundations of the world were laid, and *that*, a kingdom that shall endure for ever. There is no principle of exclusion from this kingdom. Only you have the power—fatal, alas! to many—of rejecting, and so of forfeiting your heritage. In opening to all of us the way of salvation, and leaving us free to enter upon it, or turn away from it, God deals with us all as sons. It is a manner of dealing with which you are familiar. You were all sent here to qualify yourselves for the work of life. Some of you will use your opportunities better than others. Some will in this place acquire habits of industry, of self-control, of obedience, of mental discipline and application, which

will fit them for the most useful and responsible positions in life. Others will waste their opportunities, either wholly, or to a great extent. Whose fault will this be? Not that of your parents, nor of your instructors, but your own—your own wilful neglect of God's opportunities, which will never recur. For, though you may repent of youthful follies, and strive diligently to amend your ways, you may, perhaps, be like Esau, who sought the way of repentance, and found it not, "though he sought it with tears."

(*c.*) In one particular, God's love is shown to us in a way that no analogy can reach. Our earthly parents can only provide the means of our education, our instruction, our start in life. What if these are neglected, misused, and misapplied?

Why, henceforth there is little help for us; "the voyage of our life is lost in shallows and in miseries." Our parents try remedies, but it is often too late; they are often in vain—ineffectual to do away with the mischief once wrought. God has provided a better remedy for His children.

He foresaw that they would go astray; that they would not seek after Him; that they would all become the slaves of sin; that they would alienate themselves from Him, and forfeit their everlasting inheritance.

Against this He provided a great and effectual remedy, even the sacrifice of His dearly beloved Son. Whereas we have all gone astray, and turned every one to his own way, the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He has "given Him to be sin for us, who knew no

sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

And in return for this He says, "My son, give Me thine heart."

II. Let us next consider what God asks us to give. "My son," He says, "give Me thine *heart*."

Observe, there is no doubt expressed as to the power we possess of giving our hearts to God. It is in the spirit of that commandment which our Lord acknowledged as being the first and greatest. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." This implies that we have a power over our affections. How far they are under our control is a question which Scripture does not determine. It belongs, indeed, to the province of mental philosophy, rather than to that of practical religion. But there can be no doubt that the heart influences the will, and in a less degree the understanding. Whatever work we do, unless our heart is in it, the work is sure to be ill done. There can neither be the resolute will, nor the undivided attention, which are necessary conditions of success. Whatever be the result, we are called upon to give our hearts to God. If we do so, He who is greater than our hearts and knoweth all things, will put us in the way of employing all our faculties as may be most agreeable to His Divine will, and conducive to our growth in every Christian grace. And whether we are able or not to give our hearts to God, we cannot, at all events, be ignorant of the fact. We must know by the feelings which are awakened in us by the thoughts of God, by the mention of His name,

by the summons to discharge any religious duty, whether our hearts are His.

Your daily life supplies you with an excellent test of this. You know with what a hearty goodwill you enter into the athletic games which form a chief portion of your amusement here. The prospect of a fine afternoon, with nothing to interrupt your enjoyment of healthy and invigorating exercise—does not this, and the respite from work which it implies, occasion you to rejoice in heart? Or, again; when after a long separation from your family, you are reminded by letter, or in any other way, that the time of your meeting again is not far distant, how many associations of home crowd into your minds! what joyful anticipations, what visions of happy meetings and social mirth rise up before you! Of these things you have no doubt. You have in them, therefore, a real test of your feelings towards God.

Ask yourselves, then, whether you have any pleasure in the prospect of coming before God, comparable to that of reunion with your parents and friends. Ask yourselves whether the approach of the Sabbath awakens in you any feelings of joy, like those which the approach of a holiday produces. Can you, in very truth and honesty, make David's words your own—"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go up into the house of the Lord"? And do you find actual enjoyment in religious services—in your morning and evening prayers, in your acts of public devotion, in hearing the Word of God read, preached, discussed? These are all calculated to bring you nearer to God; and if you regard Him as

your best friend, which He is, they will all convey a sense of joy and satisfaction to your hearts and minds.

But it is rather with God Himself, than with His service, that the heart finds its home. In all earthly ministrations there is somewhat of imperfection, some base alloy, which vitiates the pure metal—even the gold of the sanctuary. We may, therefore, find ourselves weary, disappointed, self-accusing, and cold in heart, during the religious services of the Lord's day; whilst if any one were to call in question our love to God, we should be grieved like Peter was, and say, "Lord! Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee!" He knows whether we have given Him our affections, or no.

III. Let us consider what this means. Giving our heart to God is an act about which there should be no possibility of mistake or misconception. God will have our undivided affection, or He will have none of us. He is a loving, and merciful, and gracious, but also a jealous God. He will not allow of our giving His glory to another. He will not be contented with the consecration to Him of half our affections—the remainder being given to the world. Offering our hearts to God with a reserve, is like the offer which Ananias made of half his land. Such an offer cannot meet with acceptance from our heavenly Father.

The analogy of school friendships will not enable you to comprehend so entire a devotion of the heart to one object. It will fail entirely. But the loyal affection which a son feels towards his earthly parents throws

some light upon the concentrated love with which we are called upon to regard Him, "in whom we live, and move, and have our being." We may, in our lighter moments, and for purposes of amusement, prefer the society of younger persons; but still there is a fund of deep undisturbed love for our parents, with which the most enthusiastic friendship will not bear comparison; a love which sometimes slumbers, but never dies; a love, the reality of which we cannot endure to be questioned.

Such, in its calm repose, in its loyal attachment, and in its undying constancy, is the Christian's love to God. But it is more than this. The feelings of reverence and awe, which belong to the love of God, raise it, and those who are animated by it, above the sphere of human affections. Human love strengthens, purifies, intensifies: Divine love exalts, enlarges, sanctifies; in one thing both agree, that the feelings are concentrated upon a person; not a system nor a creed; not an abstraction, but a living being.

Such alone can ask for the gift of a loving heart.

Were our knowledge of the Almighty nothing more than that of the men of Athens, who dedicated an altar to the "Unknown God," we should find it difficult to comply with the demand—"give Me thine heart." But as He has revealed Himself to us, it would seem to be both easy and natural. In the Old Testament we find our heavenly Father dealing with a whole people—the people whom He had chosen for Himself—as children.

He appears in the books of the prophets as the

Father, not only of the Jewish people, but all the nations of the earth, whose wilful disobedience He punishes, whose ambitious schemes He controls and holds in check, and whose obedience He rewards by His protection and favour. But the conception of God as revealed in the law and the prophets is always that of a Being unapproachable, invisible, and awe-inspiring. A mysterious grandeur shrouds Jehovah from mortal cognisance; clouds and darkness are the habitation of His seat; His voice is heard in the mighty thunder, and mortal man cannot pierce the veil that separates between him and his Creator.

In the New Testament how different is the aspect of God! Revealed not only as "I Am," the eternal self-existing Being, He becomes "Immanuel," God with us, in the person of His Son; aye, and more than that, God in us, by the indwelling of His Holy Spirit.

Blessed prerogative of the Christian believer! By the eye of faith he sees the invisible; by the power of the Spirit he comprehends the incomprehensible. God, in His most endearing attributes, has been once for all revealed to him on this theatre of human life and action. God has written on the brightest, although the saddest, page of the world's history His own inseparable character. We read it in the ministry of One who knew no rest, in His compassionate zeal for the bodies and souls of men; we read it in the record of the well of Sychar, and of the house and tomb of Bethany; we read it in the words, the deeds, the sufferings, of Him who loved His own unto the end. We read it at Geth-

semane, at Calvary, and by the Lake of Galilee. Lastly, we read it in the vision which arrested Paul in his headlong career of persecution; and the lesson that we read is that which is the theme of angels, the subject of the adoring hymns of cherubim and seraphim—*God is Love!*

IV. Let us now briefly consider the words of the text in their human aspect.

1. The words, "My son, give me thine heart," are uttered in your ears by various voices. First of all, by your parents. They value your love as a blessing in itself, as a fit return for their love to you, as a means of keeping you from evil associates, and as an assurance that in the helpless time of age, when "second childishness and mere oblivion" come over them, you will not forsake them.

Oh, neglect not such an appeal! Love, honour, and obey your earthly parents, if you hope for happiness in this life, and for a longer day of bliss in that land of everlasting rest, which your heavenly Father has prepared for you according to His promise.

Here your companions' voices call you. It may be for good; it may be to use your time profitably, to submit to necessary discipline, to avoid offences against good taste and propriety—all these are on the side of good—if so, hearken to them. But if not—if they tempt you to idleness, to self-indulgence, to childish levity, or even to a direct breach of God's commands—heed them not. Turn to them a deaf ear. If you listen to them, you will destroy your own happiness; for if you do as they would have you, your heart will not be in your work.

Your listening to them will produce no solid satisfaction. You will not go on from strength to strength, but from weakness to weakness; the springs of your moral being will be tainted, and your whole character deteriorated.

By-and-by the world's voice will call you. Pleasure, ambition, social enjoyment, literary distinction—all the world's lures and baits will be spread out before you, and you will be invited to choose. The choice will rest with yourselves. How shall you be preserved in it from error?

Remember what was Solomon's choice. Do as he did. Ask for wisdom at the Lord's hands. Ask for spiritual discernment. Ask for instruction how to use the world as not abusing it—how to partake of such innocent enjoyments as your conscience tells you that you may indulge in, without your heart being alienated from God.

But if you find that the world's attractions wean your affections from God; if you find that your resistance to evil is becoming weaker, and your delight in good fainter; resolve at once to cut off whatever tie has bound you, and let nothing hinder the entire surrender of your heart to God. Lose not a day, nor an hour. Give Him your heart now. Give it to Him while it is comparatively pure; give it before the world has claimed it, and tampered with its faithfulness and honesty.

It is easier now than it will be hereafter. It is better worth God's acceptance now, in its youthful freshness, buoyancy, and hope, than if you offered it to Him jaded with the unsatisfying pleasures of the world,

and reft of its spring-tide bloom and fragrancy, fit only "with sere flowers to be cast aside," and swept away with refuse things, "whose end is to be burned."

It will be productive of more happiness to yourselves, if you trust in God and give your heart to Him at once. Depend upon it that He who said, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven," is watching on His mediatorial throne for the slightest sign, the faintest indication in your hearts of turning to God, that He may present you to His Father and your Father, to His God and your God. Oh! then, lose not a day. Give yourselves wholly to God, that you may be His in time and in eternity — His through faith in the atoning blood of Christ; His through the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit; His through the all-powerful mediation of Him who suffered death, that henceforth all who believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

2. All who are concerned in the education of the young must feel how important is the request, "My son, give me thine heart." Many of us here are in that position—representing the parents or guardians of the boys under our charge. To you, therefore, I would address a few words, and suggest some considerations which occur to me as bearing upon our daily duties.

We are entitled to say to those who are placed under our care, "My son, give me thy heart," if we have kept before our minds the parental relation in which we stand, but not otherwise. If we have not loved them

first, they will not love us. Certainly they will not love us if we only speak to them in anger; if we check and repress their natural yearning after sympathy; if, forgetting that we were ever young, we deny them the innocent pleasures of youth. They will not love us if we show ourselves careless of their wishes, harsh towards their follies, inconsiderate of their youth and weakness, negligent of their health and comfort.

We are standing for a time in the place of parents. We have every day opportunities of showing our care for the bodies and souls of the children committed to us. What a solemn and important trust! How is it discharged?

My brethren and friends, I accuse no man. But, conscious as I am to myself of great shortcomings, both in providing for the temporal and spiritual wants of the young with whom I have most to do, ready to bear to the full my share of the responsibility which these questions involve, and only desirous that the work of Christ may abound in this school, I ask you a question which I have good reason to ask myself, "What are you doing to win the hearts of the young?"

I believe that it is better to aim first at winning the heart, and then at awakening the intellect. Without the former, we shall fail in stimulating the energies of the mind. It is better to be contented with less than may be fairly expected in the way of work, than to keep up a constant irritation by complaints.

In all these matters your experience—that of many among you at least—goes far beyond mine, and you

have approved yourselves before competent judges to be not unmindful of the great trust that has been committed to you. I need not, therefore, dwell any longer on these matters. Suffice it to have mentioned them. Suffice it to have addressed *φωνᾶντα ξυνέτοισι*: to have spoken to you *ὡς φρονίμοις*.

To conclude. Let us all join in the prayer that the hearts of all here may be given to their heavenly Father —that we may all love Him, who first loved us, and that as a consequence of this we may love each other in Him. May the relations of pupils towards their masters and superiors, and those of the latter towards the former, be hallowed by mutual regard and sympathy; and then in after years all will bless the day when at this place they learned to apply one of the most valuable precepts that religion can enforce—"My son, give me thine heart."

[*October*, 1860.]

XXVI.

ON INDEPENDENCE AND CORRECTNESS OF JUDGMENT.

"Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?"
LUKE XII. 57.

THESE words, uttered by our Lord in the presence of a large assembly, contain partly an answer to a request made by one of the company—that Jesus would divide an inheritance between two brothers; and partly a reproof addressed to all who shrink from exercising the faculty of judgment which God has given them.

It is in the latter sense that they are applicable to us. And the subject to which, by the blessing of God, I would draw your attention this morning is, Independence of judgment enjoined by our Lord as a duty consistent with rectitude of judgment.

If the two be separated, evil results are sure to follow.

Leaning entirely upon the authority and suggestions of another is fatal to anything like a manly development of the character, and it leaves the individual who pins his faith wholly on another, subject to desertion, and therefore liable to utter helplessness, the sport of

caprice, possibly the victim of treachery and malignity, destitute of self-reliance and self-respect.

On the other hand, if independence of judgment be indiscriminately sought, if less regard be paid to what is right, than to what is agreeable, or original, or suited to our particular bent, there is no saying to what extent our judgment may become perverted, or into what mistakes, deeply affecting our private happiness and the interests of society, we may not be betrayed.

And in religious matters these evil consequences are still greater, because greater interests are at stake. Backwardness to employ our faculties in the service of God resembles the faint-heartedness of the Israelites who refused to go at the Lord's bidding to take possession of the Promised Land; while rashness and inconsiderateness argue a want of perception of our relations to God, and to the world in which He has placed us; an absence of reverence for His law; and a deficiency in that fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom.

I. To begin with independence of judgment. Our Lord's words, "Why judge ye not even of yourselves?" imply some degree of surprise. Taken in their highest sense, they appear to mean, "Why do ye not discern of yourselves your true state—that which is just—the justice of your case before God?" That men do not—in many cases will not—judge for themselves, is a well-known truth. Some of the chief errors to which the human mind is liable, errors pointed out by the great restorer of natural science in this country, arise from dependence on others. What he calls "idols of

the tribe, and of the den," are nothing more than erroneous notions arrived at either through trusting implicitly the common sense of mankind, or from unduly narrowing our field of observation in deference to the peculiar opinions of the set in which we live. These errors would be bad enough if there were no persons ready to take advantage of them, none on the look-out to pervert and mislead. But as there are many such; as men from party spirit, personal ambition, and private interest often seek to bias, and do materially bias, the minds of others to the detriment of truth and right; it becomes a matter of necessity for each man to learn to judge for himself.

The habit of doing so is like all other moral habits: it must be learned by practice. The faculty which we possess by nature must be exercised; otherwise, it will lie dormant.

Moreover, it must be acquired early. It is impossible, after accustoming ourselves for many years to follow the judgment of others, to assume to ourselves all at once an entire independence. We cannot go to war with armour that we have not first proved.

It is at school that we should expect the habit of independence to be formed. For there is a severance from home ties, and parental authority, which seems, at first sight, highly favourable to the formation of independent principles of judging and of acting.

What is the case? I believe that it is at school that the contrary habit is generally formed. There is no society in which public opinion exercises a more abso-

lute—sometimes a tyrannous—authority. The opinion of the mass of the school is a reflection of that of a few who are their acknowledged leaders. The verdicts of the latter are received in an unquestioning way, and even the careless expressions which fall from their lips are registered in the memories of their younger companions as if they were oracles. It is by no means necessary for them to give a reason for their opinions; it would sometimes, indeed, be very difficult to find any reason at all for them; but let them be uttered, and they are sure to be caught up and recorded in some too faithful memories, possibly to be repeated at the next fitting opportunity.

I believe this is no exaggerated statement. If not—if it be the truth, or anything approaching to it—those who have the ear of their school-fellows in the way to which I have referred, ought surely to be very guarded in their expressions; knowing that by their words they shall hereafter be justified or condemned, and remembering the awful warning denounced against those who cause Christ's little ones to stumble and fall away.

Independence of judgment is not a common quality in schoolboys. It requires a considerable effort to shake off whatever natural indolence, or diffidence, or dislike of singularity we may have. To be unlike others, to incur blame for the fact of being independent (for the indolent and dependent will blame those who differ from them), requires no little courage and patience. Those who are determined to judge for themselves, rather than

see through other people's eyes, must make up their minds to be mistaken occasionally. Correctness in judgment is the result of frequent attempts, often of repeated failures. He who wishes to become strong must be content to be made so "out of weakness."

II. The words of our text suggest the inquiry, "How are we to obtain correctness as well as independence of judgment?" To say that we must receive it from above, seems a truism, for "every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of lights." But it is no less important to bear in mind that it is the gift of God—that He alone can enable us to form correct judgments.

At the same time we are speaking of man's part in the matter. Our Saviour's words entitle us to regard every individual as capable, to a certain extent, of judging rightly. We have already spoken of *exercising* the faculty of judging. This is indispensable. Correcting our judgment by that of others; analysing it, and bringing the light of reflection to bear upon it from different quarters, will be of great service. Talking over matters (if debatable) with others, or, if private, thinking them over by ourselves; looking at them in various aspects; committing our judgments to writing, and then reverting to them afterwards; are well-known and commonly practised expedients. If we are but honest with ourselves, we shall often, after a short interval, pass the severest censure on our own judgment. And we may, on the other hand, derive encouragement from the observation, that our earlier judgments have been borne

out by the truth of facts, or have not been disowned by our maturer judgment.

How to use the authority of others, not slavishly, but with a due reverence for superior wisdom and knowledge, is a difficult question.

It is difficult, moreover, to determine to what extent, *i.e.* within what limits, as to matter, we are to exercise our judgment. There are some subjects which are wholly beyond our power. These we must be content to leave unsettled. Again, there are many questions which may be regarded as settled, once for all. To re-open these—to ignore the labours and achievements of our predecessors—is not only waste of labour, but folly and presumption.

Still there remains a great variety of subjects which demand our earnest attention, and call for our decision. The end and object of life; the relation in which we stand to God and man; our grounds for believing the articles of our faith; our position as members of Christ's Church; the duties to the world around us which devolve upon us, as believers; the way of reconciling with each other duties apparently contradictory—such as that which the text enjoins, and that which our Lord elsewhere proclaims, "Judge not, that ye be not judged"—to say nothing of the countless occasions arising out of our daily life, which call for our judgment, and require promptitude in decision and action—all these offer a fair field for the exercise of judgment, and we cannot, without a dereliction of duty, avoid them when they present themselves.

An objection may, perhaps, be raised to this. It may be said—as the Church of Rome has long taught—that the principle of private judgment may be good for learned men, for thinkers, but that the majority of people have neither the time nor the intellectual capacity to enable them to attain to reasonable convictions. Let it not be forgotten, nevertheless, that each one of us will be judged by the light which he has himself received, and not by the greater light granted to his neighbour. The sentence pronounced against the slothful servant who buried his talent, warns us against similar heedlessness and indifference in the use of God's gifts. On the other hand, every encouragement is held out to those who make a faithful use of the talents committed to them.

Nothing is more alien to the spirit of Christianity than the doctrine that religious truths must be brought before all minds in the same way, and be by them received without questioning, as something external to themselves, which they are bound to obey, and about which no inquiry may be made.

Christ did not come into the world to proclaim a scheme of doctrine completely formed, which should be mechanically received and obeyed. He came to reveal God to us, and to communicate to the human soul a new power, which should enable it to shake off the chains of sin. By the stupendous gift of the Holy Spirit, our guide and instructor in eternal truths, He has placed man in a position to solve for himself the great problems of religion. Though, at times, His teaching was

"with authority," at other times it encouraged independence of thought, and left to the disciples all that freedom and spontaneous action of the mind and conscience which was necessary for their individual development. Have you not observed, that when Jesus did pronounce a sentence, precise, formal, decisive, we may surely find that He, elsewhere, uttered another sentence which seems a contradiction to the first, and which forces us to reflection, and the use of our judgment?

In thus encouraging independence of thought, and calling forth the powers of judgment which are implanted in each individual, Jesus appears as an example to teachers. Did He veil His Godhead, and restrain Himself, in order that He might not oppress His disciples by His authority? Then let all who are called to be the guides or instructors of youth, refrain from exacting a more unquestioning submission to dogmatic teaching than their Master's example warrants; rather let them encourage the feeble efforts of those who are feeling for the truth, and who desire to bring their individual consciences into harmony with the revelation of God.

As some misapprehension may arise as to the proper work of conscience here indicated, let me warn you, my younger hearers, not to mistake the natural inclinations of your own hearts for the voice of conscience.

Conscience is that moral faculty of approval and disapproval implanted in us by God, to which all our actions, thoughts, and desires are submitted. Conscience

owes its life to external light, which comes down from the Father of lights; and it receives constant supplies and reinforcements from the example of Christ, as He is represented to us in the Gospels. Conscience, being the voice of God, often contradicts the voices of our own hearts. If the latter be loud and disorderly, the voice of conscience is silenced for a time. It is a mistake to suppose that conscience can ever contradict the revealed word; though it is a matter of every day's experience, that our hearts, being sinful and corrupt, find in the ordinances of Revelation matter for cavil, dispute, and questioning. When people speak of the conscience as partaking of the corruption of human nature, they confuse, I think, between the conscience and the will, or the conscience and the understanding. Conscience has never for a moment lost its rightful authority over man's other faculties, though the actual force of conscience has always been liable to diminution from the disorders of the human constitution, and from the mutiny and uproar of the inferior faculties.

The more your hearts obey the voice, and acknowledge the supremacy of conscience, as Bishop Butler and Chalmers have defined it, the more consistently will you observe the laws of God, and His Son Jesus Christ.

But do not imagine that conscience is independent of the Spirit of God. On the contrary, it is through the conscience that God's Holy Spirit deals with us, works in us, and influences us. The consciences of the pure in heart are permeated throughout by the Spirit of God, they lie open to the influx of light from above, which

shines into the dark recesses of the heart. Let it not be supposed for a moment that the believer can dispense with the enlightenment of the Spirit of God. Without this, the light that is in him will be darkness, conscience will lie dormant, and other agencies will be active within the human breast.

Nor will conscience supply the need of an external revelation, nor suggest the true remedy for sin. Its proper function lies in controlling the inferior faculties; and in bringing them under the operation of that Divine principle which gives life to the soul, and light to the understanding.

The teaching of our Lord does not resemble the teaching of a philosopher. He gives those who seek Him something more valuable than precepts and doctrines. He regenerates the conscience, directs the will, and quickens the intelligence, that we may for ourselves discover the just and the true. He refuses to be called Rabbi, to be an authority, in the vulgar sense of the word. He is not our Pope. He is our Saviour, our Educator. All true education has for its end, not to extinguish individuality, but rather to nourish and strengthen it. How mistaken, how far removed from the liberty of the Gospel are those who think that they see the true Christian only where the outward profession, mode of speech, manner, and dress, conform to their own notions of what a pious person ought to be! Such may *love*, but they fail to *recommend*, the service of Him whose sympathies were as wide as the world He came to save, who abstained from laying down petty

laws and rules, who rebuked the narrowness of His disciples when they would hinder a fellow-worker, saying, "Forbid him not, for he that is not against us is for us," yea, though he "followeth not with us" in out ward customs, nor boasts of wearing the badge of the elect.

The Evangelists, indeed, are an authority for us; but it is that gentle authority of love, which has in it nothing of the nature of despotism. The sacred writers speak to us with the more weight, because they confess their own weakness and liability to error, and claim allegiance in the name of Him whose ambassadors they are.

Left to itself, conscience would be incapable of renewing and regenerating us. It has not a missionary, but a judicial function. But God has come to its aid, by presenting to us the holy image of His Son. Our case, then, resembles that of a child born with a genius for music; if he never hears any musical sound, his talent will increase slowly, if at all, and at last will become extinct. Suppose, on the other hand, that a masterpiece containing the quintessence of all beauty should be frequently performed in the hearing of this child, it would be easy to foretell the influence of such perfect harmony on the development of his genius.

The life of Jesus Christ is our Divine masterpiece; in the contemplation of it conscience awakes, is enlightened, and goes from strength to strength. A babe in Christ, hearing a word from the lips of the Divine Master, accepts it at first because it is the *Master's*

word; but in time the conscience recognises the eternal verity, the everlasting necessity of that word. It has found an echo deep in human nature. This is the internal evidence which, thank God, can never be gainsayed, overcome, or utterly darkened; the evidence of conscience—the voice of God within us—will eternally sound its amen to the written oracles of God. And the signs of the times in which we are living warn us to fall back with greater humility and more earnest prayer upon that inward guidance, the more earnestly, humbly, and prayerfully, in proportion as the hitherto received and accepted facts of sacred history are assailed from without. Truth must live for ever, must triumph. The truth will stand any test; and God's faithful witness, conscience, will continue to testify to the truth in the ears of every one to whom the truth is dear, and who comes to God, and not to man, for light; who suffers no man, and no authority, to interfere between his soul and his God.

In Christian society there is a great variety of opinion touching the legitimacy of certain actions, which are not forbidden by the moral law, but which do sometimes interfere with the higher life of the soul. Some draw the line so rigidly as to shut out many whom Christ has not shut out; they lay upon the young burthens which they are not able to bear. Many words which might be better employed are spent in discussing the lawfulness of such amusements as balls and theatres; the time to be given to recreation; also as to the speculations of commerce, and their com-

patibility with morality. In all such cases, my younger brethren—for you will all have to think and decide for yourselves, and the sooner you begin, the earlier you will acquire independence and correctness of judgment—in all such cases question your own consciences *seriously, sincerely,* as before a Divine tribunal; but, for the sake of Him who would have you escape condemnation, do not mistake your own secret predilections for the voice of conscience. If conscience leaves you free, use your liberty; your liberty is sanctified, if in very truth it is your conscience which grants the indulgence; but remember not to throw stumbling-blocks in the way of those who are weaker than yourself. If conscience frees you *not,* then *stop,* for to him that believes a thing to be unlawful, to him it is unlawful.

There is one application of the principles above stated which I would make before we part. You have been invited to the table of the Lord, to join this day with the society of Christian believers in eating bread and drinking wine in remembrance of Christ's death, and in obedience to His command. The duty of complying with that invitation has been brought before you in the clearest and simplest way. Henceforth to the question, "Shall I attend the celebration of the Lord's Supper or no?" you must be prepared to give an answer. If you endeavour to shift the responsibility upon your teachers, they may answer in the words of the text, "Why do ye not even of yourselves judge that which is right?"

You alone can know the motives which bring you to

the table of the Lord. If love, and obedience, and faith, and hope induce you to draw near, blessed are ye. But if custom, or a regard for appearance, or superstition lead you to approach the table of God, how do you differ from the poor idolater who prostrates himself before his fetish, or the Catholic who mutters prayer after prayer as he counts his beads, observes fasts, and performs penance? It is possible that both these may act more in accordance with conscience, and be more sincere in their adoration than the outwardly conforming Protestant.

Let no such self-deception find acceptance with you; for depend upon it, it will not stand before God.

As Christ has made you free, show that you value your freedom. As He has given you the Holy Spirit, and promised to guide you into all truth, show that you love the truth.

And when you stand hereafter before the tribunal of God, may He to whom the Father has committed all judgment approve and sanction the use that you have made of His gifts, and welcome you into the joys of His eternal and heavenly kingdom.

[*March* 3, 1861.]

XXVII.

ON OBEDIENCE.

"What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it."—DEUT. XII. 32.

THE exhortation conveyed to the children of Israel in these words, is one which was often repeated. We find it in an earlier chapter of the Book of Deuteronomy, and in more than one passage in the Book of Joshua; and lest it should be imagined that the command had died with the occasion, the last inspired words which close the canon of the New Testament contain a similar prohibition, as if to show the unchangeableness and inviolability of God's commands, whether they be addressed to Jew or Gentile.

The subject which I propose to lay before you this morning is obedience.

I. The duty of obedience, in its highest sense, springs from our relation to God. We were originally created, and are sustained in our daily existence, by an infinitely wise, just, holy, and benevolent Being. He has placed us here in a state of probation and trial, with a view of admitting us hereafter to a higher state of being, if we comply with certain conditions. And He has given us a moral nature corresponding, though imperfectly, to

His nature, which circumstance renders the fulfilment of His conditions possible. If we fail in complying with these conditions, another state of being is reserved for us, of which no more need be said than that all Scripture agrees in representing it as a state of misery and torment. Clearly, therefore, our interest requires that we should fulfil the conditions which God imposes. And one main condition is obedience to His commands.

It is our duty to obey God, because He has an inherent sovereign right over us. He is the sole author of our mental and bodily constitution, and we cannot refuse obedience to Him without violating that constitution, in other words being untrue to our nature.

Again, our temporal no less than our eternal interest requires that we should obey God. His commands are not grievous, but such as we should expect from the parental character under which He has revealed Himself in the Scriptures. One spirit runs through them all, so that we need be under no apprehension of one part of our duty clashing with another; whilst, on the other hand, if we obey the dictates of our own hearts, regardless of any external law, but only desirous of securing what we desire, we shall be the sport of innumerable caprices and contrary gusts of passion. In fact, the choice lies between serving one good master, and serving many bad ones.

An act of obedience to the will of God is productive of immediate satisfaction; whilst an act of disobedience produces disquietude and fear. Our first parents hiding themselves from the presence of the Lord among the

trees of the garden, Balaam vacillating between his known duty to God, and his desire to secure the rewards which the king of Moab held out to his ambition, and Jonah flying across the sea from before the face of the Lord, seeking to put the length of the Mediterranean between himself and his duty, are instances of the misery and folly of disobedience, and of the utter futility of man's attempting to overthrow the arrangements of God.

On the other hand, Scripture abounds in instances of the favour of God being bestowed on men, as a reward for obedience. The whole of God's dealing with the Jewish nation sets this forth in a strong light. The Rechabites were chosen as an example of obedience in the midst of a rebellious generation—of obedience rendered to the commands of an earthly father, but accepted by their heavenly Father. The almsgiving and just dealing of Zacchæus, springing, as they did, from a principle of obedience to God, won the favour and obtained the blessing of Him who was conspicuous for His own perfect obedience to His Father's will. And the fasting and prayers of Cornelius were in like manner acceptable to God, so that he was chosen to be the first member of the Gentile Church, and instructed in the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

II. The text recommends to us the duty, not merely of a general obedience, but of exact obedience.

The essence of this is doing unhesitatingly what God commands, not with any interpretation of our own, not with any mental reservation, nor with any addition, but

in its purity and simplicity, as before One who sees through our actions, and thoughts, and motives—an all-wise and all-scrutinising God.

Whenever a duty is brought clearly before us, perform it we must, even though we may shrink from it naturally, or though it may not approve itself to our judgment. It will not do for us to imitate Saul, in sparing the best of the flocks and herds, and destroying the refuse. Such conduct will only bring upon us disgrace and discomfiture like his. If we should take upon ourselves to judge the commands of God to be useless, or even foolish (as Naaman regarded the command to wash seven times in Jordan), we shall be none the better, but rather the worse, for having received them. Had the proud Syrian driven off in fiery haste, disregarding the voice of his servants, and bathed in the copious streams of Abana and Pharpar, instead of repenting of his ill-considered words, he might have remained a leper till his dying day, and not have known the healing hand of the Lord. No arguments, whether suggested by another or arising in our own minds, should interfere with the carrying out of a resolution to obey the word of God. Satan is always ready to suggest a possible exception to a general rule, and to whisper to the ear of the listener, "Thou shalt not surely die." And Satan's agents are no less ready to counterfeit the commands of God, as the prophet, who led his brother into disobedience, and then drew back aghast at the effects of his evil persuasion.

Nor should we venture to regard the commands of

God as incomplete—as wanting any additions, by way of supplement. This was the fault of Moses, when he smote the rock twice, instead of speaking to it as the Lord had bidden him. And it was, in after times, the fault of the Galatians, and the Judaising party in the Christian Church, who were not contented to abide in the Faith of the Gospel as it had been preached to them, but sought to graft on to it the observances of a worn-out creed. It is so with the Church of Rome, who have added to the articles of our faith elaborate inventions of man's devices, corrupting the pure Word of God, substituting for the Eucharist the Sacrifice of the Mass, introducing other mediators than Jesus between man and God, and claiming for the visible head of their Church an authority which the Apostles never asserted, and which the written Word of God denies.

No such tampering with the commands of God can be defended by Scripture or by right reason. God, as our Master and heavenly Father, looks for entire and exact obedience on the part of His servants and children. And if they venture to deal fraudulently or presumptiously with His mandates, what can they expect but His displeasure, and the withdrawal of His favour? How, for instance, can we expect the favour of God to rest upon us, if we neglect to obey the commandment to "do good and to distribute," to minister to the wants of others, to "do as we would be done by," in the matter of providing spiritual food for others? How can we reconcile it with our professions of love to Christ, if we

neglect to obey His command, "Do this, in remembrance of Me?"

It may be urged in excuse, "We cannot be always almsgiving, or contributing to the relief of religious societies. Nor are we always in a proper frame of mind to attend the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper." Doubtless. But there is a wide difference between giving charitable donations every week, and giving on some three Sundays in the year; between weekly communion and a total abstinence from the Lord's table. I trust, dear brethren, that these duties will commend themselves to your observance on the proper occasions, which are not far distant.

III. In every undertaking, it is our best wisdom and policy to count the cost—to acquaint ourselves with the difficulties which we have to encounter, as well as the encouragements to proceed in our endeavours.

Let us consider some of the difficulties in the way of obedience. Some of these are hindrances to our success in anything that we undertake. Such are stupidity, or not understanding what is required of us, and carelessness, or inattention to orders; a want of memory, or inability to call to mind, at the right time, what we are required to do. These are intellectual defects, which must stand in the way of our rightly apprehending, and faithfully performing, any duties which are enjoined. In any individual case they may be lessened by conscientious endeavours, but not wholly eradicated. And, therefore, in judging of the failings of persons so constituted, we shall do well to lean to the side of charity.

Another class of difficulties are moral ones. Such is fear; like that of the Israelites, which hindered them from entering the promised land; such also is pride—intellectual pride, which thinks it knows better than the lawgiver, and spiritual pride, which spurns the notion of laws being made for such an one, as, for instance, the Pharisee in the parable; such, again, is a lax sense of duty—the temper which induces us to think more of our rights and privileges and immunities, than of our responsibilities; such, lastly, is sheer wilfulness—the temper which will not endure reproof, and cannot bear to be thwarted in anything. All these are difficulties of a moral kind. They offer more hope of being overcome than the last class—intellectual difficulties—for moral habits are more under our control than intellectual habits, and, on this account, they offer less excuse and palliation for defective obedience, not to say disobedience, than intellectual difficulties.

There are also spiritual difficulties—as want of faith, coldness of heart, and that negative state of feeling which is the opposite of Christian love.

Against all these difficulties we are bound to strive, not only as Christians, but as men, or as boys who will hereafter be called upon to play their part as men. And we shall do well to bear in mind the encouragements given to us.

We have the promises of Scripture, contained in almost every page of sacred writ, and the record of God's dealings with His people, which testifies to the faithfulness of Him who promised.

We have the gift of the Holy Spirit promised to all those who ask of God—the Spirit of Love by which obedience becomes easy, and the path of duty a delight.

We have also the recollection of Jesus Christ, who has fulfilled all righteousness, to stir us up to increased exertion, and fill us with the confidence of hope. How should His example act upon us? Not, perhaps, in the way of emulation, for that is between equals; but in some way not wholly different. Surely the knowledge of any great feat performed by one who formerly stood in the same position as that in which we are placed is an incentive to our exertions. We delight to link the present with the past, and prove ourselves not degenerate. Besides, when we are engaged in doing the work of Christ, we are sure of His sympathy, and therefore of God's. Jesus said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." He who uttered these words on earth has ascended up into heaven with His glorified human body, and His encouraging voice still speaks to us, His Spirit still animates us, and urges us to do everything which the Lord our God commands, and endure everything that He in His wisdom lays upon us, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

IV. Let us now turn our attention to some of the most familiar instances in which the duty of obedience is acknowledged and acted upon.

There is one profession which is proverbial for the strictness of its requirements on this head; in which

imperfect obedience is never passed over, and disobedience, if wilful, is severely punished. Need I say that I mean the military profession?

The essence of military discipline is unhesitating, unflinching, unwavering obedience. There may be occasions on which the soldier is left to use his own judgment and discretion, but, as a rule, implicit obedience is required. The whole system of military training aims at this—obeying orders rapidly and with precision. When men are assembled in large masses no relaxation of discipline can be permitted. On special service, and where small bodies of men are employed, greater liberty is allowed, and the soldier is required to use his discretion, and act for the best; and this is more the case the higher he advances in his profession.

But no circumstances are allowed by military discipline to dispense with obedience to orders once given. It is the rapidity and precision of every movement which makes the difference between perfectly drilled troops and raw recruits. To a commanding officer it must be everything to feel that every man under him will obey his word at once, and that thousands will act as one man. He feels, then, that he can go anywhere—that he can do anything, or endure anything—with such men to back him. Well might the poet represent the fallen leader revolving the events of his past life, and calling to mind, among other things, "the sudden word of command, and the swift obedience."[1]

[1] "Il concitato imperio, e'l celere ubbidir."
Manzoni, il cinque Maggio.

In this respect the army is a noble school. It is a standing testimony to the merit of unhesitating and exact obedience.

And in every system of education which is to train up useful members of society, obedience to rules must be insisted on as absolutely essential.

The child is called upon to obey long before it can understand the reasons for this and that requirement. Parents who adopt the opposite method, and insist upon bringing every matter home to the understandings of their children, are generally obliged to confess, in the end, that they have wasted much time, and effected little. To be entrusted with the reasons for commands is one of the privileges of maturer years, which it is not true wisdom to anticipate.

In the case of school discipline, we observe the same principles at work in a more advanced stage—I should rather say, in several progressive stages. The basis must be the same. We claim at first your unquestioning obedience, as standing to you in the place of parents, and responsible to them and to God for the use we make of our authority. School discipline requires some things to be done which in themselves are neither right nor wrong, but when required by authority become a duty. Such are, the observance of certain hours, the wearing of a certain dress, keeping silence at certain times, and so forth.

Other things are forbidden, not because they are bad in themselves, but because they are inexpedient. Every school has its prohibitions. Frequently a difference is

made according to the disparity of age. Some indulgences are considered proper for boys of a certain age, which for younger boys are not deemed proper. Other habits are by common consent proscribed at school, which are extensively practised in society.

If, then, we call upon you to obey orders which do not rest immediately upon a moral or religious basis, it is because we are convinced of its being, on the whole, for your good that such orders should be obeyed. We are accountable to others for the orders we give. We are bound not to issue useless or vexatious orders, or to make similar prohibitions. But, in virtue of our position, we are as much bound to give orders, and exact obedience to them, as you are to receive them, and to obey.

Such, then, being our relative duties, it is well that we should recognise in them a high principle—that of God's favour resting on obedience, and His law being one and indivisible, allowing of no diminution nor addition.

As a part of moral training it is essential that you should discipline and control your inclinations to submit to your reason; that you should not be the slaves of your passions, but their masters.

Those who exercise the most self-control are best able to rule others. Thus obedience, in whatever school it be learned, is the main source of power to govern.

Again, it is good for us to be under a higher law than our own caprice. When we see any one conscientiously exercising self-restraint, imposing laws upon himself, undergoing constant sacrifices on *principle*, we respect

him ; and, in proportion as he is obedient to laws, we are inclined, if he be set over us, to obey his laws.

Furthermore, it is a source of satisfaction to ourselves to feel that we have strictly complied with all the requirements of duty. If we are under authority, we are not responsible for the result of orders which we carry out faithfully.

But, it may be said, some orders are not only unreasonable, but contrary to the laws of God, and the precepts of morality. If this be so, obedience becomes impossible, consistently with a due regard for those laws and those precepts. To be placed in a position where obedience is required of us, and where we feel that we cannot obey without violating a higher law, is one of the greatest trials to which humanity can be subject. Yet even under such a trial we have examples to follow. Shadrach, Meschach, and Abednego refusing to worship the golden image which Nebuchadnezzar had set up; and Daniel, persisting in his habit of prayer to God in spite of the king's decree, are instances from sacred history of similar trials overcome. One of the noblest of the Greek[1] dramas is founded on a like conflict between duty to God and the ties of kindred on the one hand, and duty to the sovereign on the other. It was but the other day when Europe applauded the heroism of a Russian officer, who preferred *death* to obedience to an order to attack inoffensive women and children. With such cases we have little to do. In revolutionary times they may occur ; but in times of peace, and under

[1] The Antigone of Sophocles.

a well-ordered government, it is more than unlikely that any one should be called upon to violate the *written* law in obedience to a higher law.

In our little world it is *most unlikely*. Nevertheless, the heroic courage which was shown by the individuals referred to may be imitated by you. There is such a thing as following the multitude, and obeying, not conscience, but public opinion—the opinion of those with whom we live. In any given society it is too much to expect that this should always be on the side of right. In a school, resistance to authority is frequently regarded with favour, and as a sign of a manly independent spirit. How much of independence there is in gratifying our own caprices, rather than submitting to an external law, we have already considered. If it comes to be a question with any of you between obedience to the laws of the school, and obedience to the conventional standard of your associates, you may show real courage and true independence of character by obeying the former and disregarding the latter.

It seems a paradox to speak of disobedience to rightful laws being the result of servility and abject fear; but so it is. The workman, who rebels against his employer's regulations, because his associates have agreed to do so: the criminal, who outrages society, because he is afraid to separate himself from his vile companions, and confess that he has a conscience in the presence of men who scoff at all compunction, and make a mock at sin—these show not their courage, but their cowardice.

And so it is with the school-boy who is afraid to

acknowledge before others that he has a righteous fear of doing wrong: that he is supposed to submit to discipline: that he finds greater satisfaction in industry than in idleness: and that he desires to please his absent parents and friends, or the masters under whom he is placed, rather than his associates, of whom he sees infinitely more, and for whose approval he is more solicitous.

I have put these thoughts on the subject of obedience before you, not because I have remarked a spirit of disobedience widely prevalent among you, but because it is my earnest wish to bring the precepts of God's Word to bear upon your daily life. I wish to show you how, when fulfilling a very simple and lowly duty, you may be acting on a very high principle. I wish also to lead you to take a practical view of your religious duties. It is right, doubtless, that you should be constantly reminded of the great truths of Evangelical religion—of your sinfulness, of your need of atonement through the blood of Christ, of the grace of God, of the efficacy of prayer, of the necessity of faith, of the powerful nature of Divine Love, and the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit—but it is not less right and needful that you should be reminded of the positive duties of obedience, and works of love, kindness, generosity, and good faith: for you cannot aim at anything higher than to be the friends of Christ; and you remember that He said, "Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

What if the implicit obedience, of which I have

spoken, be called childish? Is it not of children and child-like spirits that the kingdom of heaven consists?

What if you should incur ridicule by your excessive scrupulousness and carefulness about lesser duties? Remember who it was that said, "Whosoever shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v. 19.)

[*May* 12, 1861.]

XXVIII.

ON CHRISTIAN UNITY.

"*And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul.*"—Acts iv. 32.

The picture which is presented by this description of the early Church is one upon which we gaze with mingled feelings of admiration and regret—admiration at the wondrous effect produced by the faith in a crucified and risen Saviour which actuated the early Church; and regret that the unity which once prevailed has passed away, and that disorder, disagreement, jealousies, and misunderstandings, have come in to mar the harmony of the work of Christ and His apostles.

Let us first contemplate this work as it was. In the days of the apostles the Christians formed a singularly united brotherhood. Not only community of thought and feeling, but community of goods prevailed. The text informs us that none of the believers regarded his interest in lands, or houses, or any property, as exclusive, but that they had all things in common. Frequent meetings took place for the purposes of prayer and celebration of the Eucharist. No great schism had taken place

between East and West. No branch of the Church had arrogated to itself exclusive privileges, and admitted errors of doctrine such as to drive other branches to separate themselves from their communion. How changed is everything now! In those days no Church establishment was necessary, as the voluntary benevolence of individuals supplied all that was needed for the maintenance of public worship and the support of the poor. Now, East and West seem irrevocably disunited. Catholic and Protestant are separated by a wider breach than that of the sixteenth century, and much of that zeal and interest which ought to stimulate private devotion, and urge individuals to labour for the community, is absorbed in attacking or defending Church establishments, which, whether they are part of the constitution, or under the protection of the law of the land, are commonly regarded as necessary for the maintenance of religious worship.

Without going at all into the question why a Church establishment is necessary or useful, it may be asserted, without fear of contradiction, that ordinary minds require the stimulus of outward rites and social union for the purpose of religious worship, and that the inward flame would be in danger of speedy extinction if it were not supplied with fuel from without.

Viewed apart from the question of State support, the position occupied by the Church of England is one which is most beneficial both to the nation at large and to the individual worshipper. Its ritual is free from the extremes of Puritanical coldness on the one hand,

and of the sensuous worship of Rome on the other. And if we are not entirely of one mind and one soul, at all events we may live at peace one with another. Our Articles are drawn up in a comprehensive and, for the most part, liberal spirit; and we do not anathematize others, even though we pointedly abjure their errors.

One great secret of unity of heart and mind is, and will always be, *unity of faith*. The belief in a risen Saviour, which animated the early Christians, was very simple. It was also very vivid, and intense. In our belief more of dogmatic theology is involved; there is less of personal adherence to a Divine Teacher, and more of intellectual scepticism. Hence there is less unity of faith. Some supplementary aid to this may be furnished by the practical discharge of duties. We may not exactly agree about the interpretation of a text, or a doctrine; we may dispute about the sense of a phrase, or differ about an article, but we have a broad basis of morality and natural religion left; and this enables not merely Churchmen and Dissenters, but even those who are diametrically opposed to each other in creed, to labour for common objects. Thus Catholics and Protestants can unite for national administration, and those who deny the Divinity of our Lord, whether Jews or Unitarians, are often associated with Christian believers for charitable purposes.

It is the part of true wisdom, then, to avoid exclusiveness; to meet our fellow-men wherever we and they can find common ground. At the same time, it is

our duty to hold fast what we have received, and not to abate one jot or tittle of our belief under the impression that we may by such abatement symbolise with others; for from those who from cowardice or apathy surrender an inch of their convictions an ell will presently be demanded.

The highest view of Christian unity, as it presented itself to Augustine, Hooker, and others, is scarcely to be realized, even in imagination, by us. The most that we can apprehend, as borne out by facts, is the existence of a religious community, worshipping one God, acknowledging one Redeemer, under the operation of one Spirit, and looking for a resurrection to life everlasting. And this view of a Catholic Church is sadly perplexed and marred by the diversities of opinion on points of doctrine and matters of practice which prevail throughout Christendom.

The branch of the Church which puts forth the loudest claims to catholicity has been rudely shaken. The very existence of the Papacy seems in peril. Proclamations are widely circulated in a country professing the Catholic faith, calling upon men to embrace the religion of the Gospels; to put their faith in Christ, and to dispense with the Pope. In Protestant England, and northern Germany, there are nearly as many denominations of professing Christians as there are counties, or duchies. Even within the pale of the Church establishment in this country wide differences of opinion exist, and there is scarcely any important article of faith which is not undergoing discussion

among theologians who have been trained in the same school, and almost within the same walls.

And yet, after all, there can be no other foundation of our faith laid, than one, Jesus Christ. Man's moral nature and the basis of his religious belief remain unchanged and unchangeable. Why should there not, then, be greater unity?

To answer this question fully would require a much longer time than we have before us, and closer attention than I can bespeak from my younger hearers. But I may throw out several suggestions to account for the want of Christian unity.

First, I would assert that men's faith differs in its object, in kind, and in degree.

1. Some believe in nothing that they cannot understand; and this limits the objects of their faith, in some cases, to an extremely narrow sphere.

2. Others believe in a speculative kind of way; that is, they do not openly profess to doubt; but of belief influencing conduct, and permeating their whole character, they have little. Perhaps they would feel aggrieved if any one doubted the depth and sincerity of their faith, but they would not be willing to make a personal sacrifice for it.

3. Some are averse to dogmatic statements. They profess to believe in God, as He has revealed Himself generally in the Old and New Testaments, but they object to the precise statements of doctrine which have been elaborated by successive councils and meetings of theologians. And there is a ground for such objections.

The infinite variety in men's mental conformation renders it difficult for them to apprehend the same truth in the same manner.

I might mention other varieties, but these will, perhaps, suffice.

And now, what is the remedy? Where is it to be sought? Surely, in a discriminating search after the fountain-head of truth, and a disposition to acquiesce in the truth when once found. In the sacred oracles are contained many things that are obscure to us, because our faculties are not sufficiently enlightened to discern them, but nothing that is erroneous.

Again, the moral law of Christianity is the simplest that has been ever yet propounded. "Love worketh no ill to his neighbour:" therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. A sincere faith in Christ, and a charitable regard for all whom He died to redeem from the penalty of their sins, these are guarantees of unity and bonds of harmony which will outlive all changes of external worship, and secure the Christian against a lifeless form of religion.

The text invites us to dwell on points of agreement, rather than on points of difference; and to these our observations shall be addressed, without more than a passing allusion to the existence of political and ecclesiastical antagonism, and other external hindrances to unity. The subject of Christian unity, in its highest sense, is not, perhaps, one on which the minds of my younger hearers have dwelt. I will not, therefore, attempt any categorical teaching on this subject, but

will rather invite their attention to several kindred subjects which illustrate it.

a. The first of these is national unity.

Every one who has reflected for a moment on the causes of national greatness must have satisfied his mind that union is the source of strength; that no nation which is divided into opposing and hostile factions, can ever thrive; and that the greatest boon that a sovereign or ruler can desire for the people of the land is, that they be at unity with one another. And here let me not be supposed to mean that uniformity in all things is necessary: that is by no means the case. Perfect unity, as I have before stated in this place, is no more attainable from a conglomeration of similar ingredients than a chemical combination is produced by the mixture, say, of two acids, or two alkalis. Union of dissimilar parts for similar ends is the best guarantee for harmony of action, as in the natural body, so also in the body politic. There is such a thing also as the balance of parties, where those measures alone are carried, which secure the hearty allegiance of one party without any violent opposition from the other. When there is a strong pressure from without—an alarm of war, or a panic in the commercial world—parties unite for common ends, and England presents to the eyes of foreigners the spectacle of an united nation.

The last year has witnessed a great advance towards the realization of political unity in a neighbouring country. A short time back, and Italy was not one nation, but an assemblage of disintegrated fragments.

Now, under the dispensation of God's providence, which has employed successively the armies of an emperor, the energies of a great statesman, and the sword of a patriotic leader, to work out the unity of Italy, the dream of former generations has all but become a reality, and although the grave has closed over the master spirit of the Revolution, and the chief bulwark of political life in Italy, yet his work will go on; for it was not he alone who laboured, but the best hearts and the most active minds throughout that fair land. A feeling of brotherhood, and sympathy with the oppressed, gave strength to the armies of Sardinia, and scattered the bands of mercenaries, which vainly attempted to defend the outposts of the Papal power. And now what shall resist the determination of the people to be one? Not the presence of foreign legions, nor the idle menaces of a baffled Pontiff; nor even the jealousies of rival patriots, nor the apathy of the uneducated masses in the South. The armies of Italy and the council of the nation know their strength, and in God's good time they will exert it.

This is the picture which Italy presents. Across the Atlantic we have precisely the reverse. A nation which once experienced the truth of the maxim that "union is strength," has now burst the bands which kept the Confederated States together, and civil war is threatening to put forth all its fury, and rage with more, if possible, than its usual animosity. A kindred race, speaking our language, vying with us in commercial enterprise, and resembling us in the enjoyment of civil and religious

freedom, is on the point of breaking up—nay, has broken up—the union of its political existence; a step involving loss of life, loss of property, and loss of political strength, to a greater extent than the mind can immediately foresee. Just as the corrupt practices of the Papacy in the time of Leo the Tenth brought about the Reformation in Germany, so the intemperate advocacy of slavery by a portion of the United States of America has brought about a temporary severance of the union—a result which shows the extreme danger and folly of adopting a line of conduct which the laws of God and the rights of man alike condemn.

β. We may trace the same principles in social, which we have remarked in national and political life. "Behold, how good and joyful a thing it is," said the Psalmist, "for brethren to dwell together in unity." When we hear of a united family, what a delightful picture the mind calls up! We think of all that we have witnessed of gentle and tender affection, of forbearance and meekness, of readiness to forego selfish ends and to make sacrifices for others; of sympathy in joy and sorrow; of reverence for age, and tender pity for youth; of gratitude for kindness, and the tribute of warm uncalculating love: all these come before our mind, and make us think that in some sense the Spirit of the Lord, which is the spirit of peace and love, must be in that family.

A few days, and I trust that many of you will be realizing the blessings of which I speak. They are blessings to which you can contribute, and of which you

may be a part. The report of your good conduct here, of your diligence, of your observance of discipline, of your faithful discharge of the obligations which you are under to those who sent you to this college, will gladden the hearts and brighten the faces of those whom you love, and make your reception all the warmer, because there will be nothing of reproach to be concealed or expressed.

Beware of introducing any element of discord which might mar the peace and harmony of so fair a vision.

Beware of sullying the purity of the atmosphere of your homes by any ill words, or by the expression of any profane, or irreverent, or impure thoughts or suggestions which you may have heard unrebuked here.

Beware of giving way to selfishness among those who are perhaps already too much inclined to humour and indulge you. Avoid taunts and ill-natured discussions, and the calling up of old grievances. Members of the same family and household are more than all other persons bound, not merely by the highest Christian principles, but by the motives of self-interest, to be careful of each other's feelings and reputations; for they have the power of inflicting the severest wounds, of dealing the most deadly thrusts, and embittering, beyond all other persons, the existence of those with whom they have lived from childhood. O beware, then, of stirring up such strife! By so doing, you will be causing the growth of envy and hatred, and jealousy and heart-burning, and all that goes to make up that most deplorable of earthly sights in social life, a disunited family.

γ. The last illustration which I would place before you is one drawn from the constitution of a public school. No greater praise could be awarded to any school or place of education than that the multitude of those who received, as well as those who administered, education there, were, in the sense of which the sacred writer speaks, of one heart and of one mind.

Consider how much it implies. How much of union for good, and common resolution to resist evil! How much unselfishness and regard for the common interests of all! There is, indeed, in the public schools of England, something like a feeling of brotherhood which binds together the rising generation and those who are employed in their training and education. Differences of detail there are and must be, just as there are differences in rank and wealth, in occupations and professions, in mental and bodily endowments, and in aptitude for special studies and amusements.

These differences, existing together with differences of administration at the several schools, give them their distinguishing and characteristic marks.

But there is a code of laws, not written, but tacitly acknowledged, in all the great public schools of this country, and acted upon by those who conduct them. Certain individuals have contributed more than others to the formation of this code; but as it is only valid so far as it coincides with public opinion, I prefer regarding it as the expression of that opinion.

On the part of the public, then, it is expected that the youth of England be trained in all that is meant by "a

liberal education," and that, without giving in altogether to the utilitarian spirit of the age, which demands that all knowledge gained at school should be immediately convertible, like bank notes, into £ *s. d.*, more attention should be paid than has been hitherto given to the acquisition of historical knowledge, the study of English literature, of modern languages, and other subjects which the different branches of the public service require.

On the part of the masters, it is required that they should bear in mind the great ends of education, and remember that they who would train up Christian gentlemen must themselves set an example of that which they are bound to recommend. There is a general agreement that it is necessary, in order to encourage and foster truthfulness of character, to believe a boy's word, and, in order to discourage duplicity and deceit, to deal leniently with offences which spring from carelessness and inattention, and severely with all attempts to cover wrong-doing by falsehood.

On the part of the boys, it is expected that they should not put themselves in antagonism to their masters; for the days are past when boys and masters regarded each other as natural enemies, to be opposed tooth and nail on every occasion. A more kindly, rational, and humane system has taken the place of the extreme rigour of times gone by. Perfection is not expected of boys. But it is necessary that they should conform to discipline; that they should endeavour to be punctual, diligent, and attentive; that when a master believes them on their word, they should consider them-

selves bound in honour not to deceive a master; that all cases of endeavouring to obtain the rewards of industry by fraudulent or unfair means, such as copying from others, getting assistance from them without acknowledging it, using translations of classical authors when their use is discountenanced, are lowering to the character of the individuals and that of the school; that they defeat their own ends, and lead to inevitable exposure; and that no temporary success or advantage can compensate for the loss of self-respect and for the stings of an accusing conscience which attend every first deviation from the path of integrity, and which only give way to partial or entire deadness, which inevitably sets in when early warnings and promptings of God's Spirit are disregarded; nor can the principle be too early learnt or too rigidly adhered to by boys at school, that honesty is the best policy.

And I should neither do justice to the principles on which this College was founded, nor to the tone of Christian exhortation which you are accustomed to hear from this pulpit, nor, I trust I may add, to the moral and religious character of the present generation, if I did not assert my belief that these principles are, in the main, acknowledged here. Independently of your individual success and of the character which you bear among your equals, I cannot be wrong in assuming that we and you are united in the wish that this College may be known for the Christian character, and not merely for the scholarship or scientific attainments, of those who are educated here.

We have not so long a period to look back to as the old foundation schools; but the annals of this College already testify to the good services rendered by many of those who were educated here in every branch of public life. And the increasing numbers which gather together on these occasions bear witness to the existence of a loyal feeling of brotherhood, binding together the past and the present generation, and leading us to look forward hopefully to the future.

To those who have come here to revisit the scene of their boyish days, we would give a cordial and a Christian welcome—expressing a wish that they are maintaining and will maintain the credit and reputation of this College at the Universities, in the army and navy, in the learned professions, in society, and in commercial life; and a hope that they find the present generation here not deteriorated, but rather improved, in all that constitutes the character of the Christian gentleman—in truth and honesty, in purity and modesty, in temperance and sobriety, and in courage to avow themselves servants of God and followers of Christ. If this be the case—if they find their younger brothers and school-fellows and successors here advancing in all that is amiable and lovely and of good report, not aiming to be men, but content to be boys, whilst at the same time they diligently practise those habits which will make them useful men and citizens—we would bespeak their friendly co-operation, and ask them, in return for the welcome which they meet with here, and the joy which their well-earned honours occasion among us, to aid our

endeavours to maintain the discipline and moral tone of this institution, not only by word, but in deed—by that force of example which is more powerful than precept.

In addressing myself to the younger portion of my audience, I might perhaps remind them that the eyes of older generations are upon them, and that according as they find them deserving of praise or blame, they will naturally award praise or blame to the system of the school. But, beloved, I would rather urge you by higher motives—by motives more worthy of you—to continue in the course upon which I am persuaded that some, and I would hope many, of you are entered: a course of industry and conscientious endeavour to make good use of your opportunities and advantages here; that you may not hereafter have cause to accuse yourselves of wasted time and misused opportunities, but that you may, rather, look back upon the time you will have spent here with well-founded satisfaction and thankfulness to the Giver of all good.

Let these anniversaries remind you that you belong to a great and increasing community, which is yearly numbering among its ranks more of the intelligence and activity of mind which makes this country hold a foremost place among the nations of the earth. Remember, when weeks and months have passed away, the kindly sympathy exhibited by older members of this community towards you. Strive to win by your good conduct a name among your contemporaries, and, whatever may be your gifts, be sure that a conscientious

employment of them will promote your present happiness and future usefulness.

Lastly, let me address a word of farewell to those who are about to leave us. Some of you have been here for many years; in fact, your earliest associations and ideas of education must be connected with this place. And you have all been long enough here to carry away some impression of the general tone of the school. May those impressions be of a kindly and Christian stamp. May you be of one heart and one mind in all that is good; and may your chief desire in the various scenes of life in which you will be placed be, to carry out fully what has been more or less imperfectly achieved here—the unfolding of your character in every Christian grace, in every quality which will make you useful and honoured members of the body politic, and in every social virtue which will make you no less loved than esteemed and respected.

We commit you to that Providence which watches over the affairs of nations, and the welfare of societies, and which also regards the development of the individual character with a father's care and love. We commit *some* of you to the keeping of our common God and Father with a confidence inspired by knowledge of the past, and *all* with ardent hopes and prayers, that you may be led rightly for the future.

Let it be your first aim to secure the foundations of your faith in God through Christ, and to place yourselves at the disposal of His Holy Spirit. You will then be in sympathy with all that is really good and

great in the world. Your hearts will vibrate with the universal heart of Christendom, and you will strive to promote the growth of Christ's spiritual kingdom by your earnest prayers, your resolute endeavours, your consistent conduct, and your self-devoted lives.

Bearing about with you a sense of your immortal destinies, and desirous that all men should be brought to a knowledge of the truth, you will set the example at the Universities, in the civil and military service of your country, in the ministry of the Church, at the bar and senate—in a word, in whatever walk of life you may choose as your own, or to which circumstances may call you—of minds raised above the ephemeral objects of the world's ambition, of lives unstained by sin, and of earnest endeavours to benefit others in all that most concerns their highest happiness. God be your aid: Christ be your pattern: the Holy Spirit be your portion!

Let us end as we began. Let us pray that the spirit of Christian unity which prevailed in the early Church may bring together all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and especially the members of the Church established in this nation, and all the subjects of these dominions. Let us pray, and look for an answer to our prayers, that in this, and all other schools and colleges immediately dedicated to God's honour and service, true religion and the wisdom that is from above may flourish and abound. May the same mind dwell in all of us who are here assembled, and may that be

the mind that was in Christ Jesus. And may the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace and righteousness—abound in us, and make us known of all men both by our activity and zeal for God's service, and also for the love which we bear one to another.

[*Preached on the last Sunday in the half-year, June* 16, 1861.]

XXIX.

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

"And this is the name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS."—JEREMIAH XXIII. 6.

THE passages in the books of the Prophets of the Old Testament which refer to the kingdom of the Messiah are neither few nor unimportant; but it would be difficult to point to any of greater weight than this, which has been chosen by our Church for the Epistle for the last Sunday in the Christian year. It follows, in the Book of Jeremiah, a denunciation of woe against the false shepherds, who had misled and scattered the people of the Lord; with which is joined a promise of a general restoration of the flock, and their re-establishment under the protection of shepherds which should feed them.

The passage which we are immediately concerned with opens with the prophecy—

"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch." As if the promise of faithful shepherds were not enough, God adds to it an assurance that He will raise up one of the seed of David, whose kingdom shall be a righteous kingdom, and who shall bring salvation to His people.

This prophecy of the Messiah under the name of *the Branch*, is not peculiar to Jeremiah. We find it also in Isaiah, in more than one place. Thus we read,[1] "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious;" and,[2] "There shall come a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." It was calculated to awaken in the Jewish people feelings of reverence for their rulers of the royal seed of David, and an expectation of deliverance through their descendants from the dangers that threatened them. Such a promise, which linked their hopes of the future to all their brightest associations of the past, was well suited to encourage and comfort them in days of national dejection and humiliation.

But the proper office and function of the branch was to be no mystery. The prophet was further instructed to declare, "A king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth." Not only was the branch to arise, but He was to sit on the throne of David, endowed with power from on high. Jerusalem had seen many branches of the royal tree cut off and wither; this should be exalted and clothed with power; He was to reign and prosper. His spiritual kingdom should know no end—should be subject to no reverse. The strength of Judah should not be cut off again as of late, when Josiah fell at the battle of Megiddo, a righteous prince slain by the uncircumcised; but He should prosper, He should reign, not merely for His own good, as selfish rulers are wont to do, but for

[1] Isa. iv. 2. [2] *Ib.* xi. 1.

the good of His people; and who should they be? Not only the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, but the people of the whole earth; for all kingdoms, and nations, and languages, should bow down before Him, and serve the Lord their Redeemer. He should "execute judgment and justice in the earth." He should not give cause to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, saying, Behold the people of Israel, the chosen people; they all follow after iniquity, and their princes pervert justice. For[1] "He shall judge the people with righteousness, and the poor with judgment."

How wonderful are the dispensations of God, my brethren! How marvellous must these prophecies have appeared to the Jews. How strangely they must have sounded in the ears which still rang with the doom that had been pronounced against three of their princes—Shallum, Jehoiakim, and Coniah. One should die in captivity; another should be buried with the burial of an ass beyond the walls of Jerusalem; the third should be a despised broken idol, and none of his seed should prosper.[2]

In the midst of his country's disasters, which the prophet alone foresaw and foretold, he alone saw, rising in the distant horizon, a glorious hope, a righteous branch, which the Lord should raise up unto David. "In His reign Judah should be saved, and Israel should dwell safely." There should be no more destruction brought upon the people of God for their backslidings; no removal from the land of their fathers into a land

[1] Ps. lxxii. 2. [2] Jer. xxii. 28, 30.

of strangers; no dispersion of the tribes. The power of Babylon should not subdue them, and the Assyrian should hurt them not; Judah and Israel should dwell in safety under the rule of a righteous king; His faithfulness and truth should be their shield and buckler.

These were glorious promises held out to the people of the Lord in the day of their trouble. Doubtless, they would wish to know the name of the king who was to be their Saviour and Deliverer. And the prophet leaves them not in doubt—"This is the name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness." You, who are familiar with the language of the Old Testament, know that "to be called," is often used in the sense of "to be." Thus, the words of Jeremiah, which we are considering, mean, "This King, whose advent is spiritually foreseen by me, and whom I declare to you, is no other than God; and the law of His kingdom shall be pure and righteous, for the Ruler shall be righteous, and His people shall share in His righteousness."

The Jews had tried earthly sovereigns, and had found them wanting. They had endeavoured for a time to serve God, and earn His favour by their own righteousness, but their endeavours had failed; their righteousness was as filthy rags in the sight of God. Hereafter they were to be clothed in a righteousness not their own, in which they should "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever." This coming deliverance from the power of their spiritual enemies had been prefigured by the deliverance of the children of Israel from the land of Egypt. It was

to be further represented by the restoration of the Jews from the land of their captivity, and the rebuilding of the Temple of Jerusalem. Of these two types, the second should take the deepest hold on the minds of the Jewish nation; as the words of the prophet indicate, "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land" (ver. 7, 8).

But if the restoration of his countrymen after seventy years of captivity seemed to the prophet a greater deliverance than that which God wrought for his people by the hand of Moses, what must the great event, of which both were but a shadow, have appeared to him? —that great fulfilment of a more ancient prophecy, namely, "That the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and all nations shall flow unto it?" . . . "for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem"?[1]

These prophecies were understood by the Jews to refer, not to a temporal kingdom, but to the kingdom of the Messiah. True, they often mixed up ideas of worldly grandeur with those of spiritual power, but there were not wanting among them prophets to direct their minds to the true meaning of the words which bore reference to the Saviour of the world—the King,

[1] Isa. iii. 2, 3.

not only of the Jews, but of all believers. He alone should reign in righteousness; He should be the true Melchisedek. The kingdoms of Israel and Judah should crumble away and be no more, but His kingdom should endure throughout all ages; yet still the children of Israel should call upon Him as the Lord *our* Righteousness. With reference to Him every pious Israelite would say,[1] "In the Lord have I righteousness and strength." Whilst the Gentile believer would rest his hopes of being accepted by God on the promises made in the name of Christ, such as that of the Apostle Paul, "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

My brethren, if the words of our text have so wide an import, if they refer not to the temporal restoration of the Jewish race, but to the acceptance with God, through Christ, of all nations who have learned to call upon Him as "the Lord *our* righteousness," we may surely venture to pass at once from the sphere of prophecy, and enter into the region of heavenly wisdom, which is illumined by the light of the Gospel.

Under the old dispensation men were accounted righteous before God in proportion to their faith and obedience. Thus Abraham, we are told, "believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness."[3] And he showed his obedience to the commands of God by obeying His calls, and by his readiness to offer up his only son Isaac.

[1] Isa. xlv. 24. [2] 1 Cor. i. 30. [3] Gen. xv. 6.

Now, forasmuch as all obedience springs from faith, and faith is the gift of God, Abraham's righteousness was not his own, but of God. The Lord God Almighty, who called him out of Ur of the Chaldees, and made him the father of many nations, made him strong in faith, and imparted to him that righteousness which made him meet to be the friend of God.

And whenever we read in the Old Testament of righteous men, we may understand by that, men to whom God graciously imparted the desire to serve Him, together with such power to carry out the desire into execution, that the term righteous might be applied to their lives, taken as a whole. That they were not freed from the liability to err, we have abundant proof, from the history of Abraham, who twice denied his wife Sarah, saying that she was his sister, and thereby nearly led Pharaoh and Abimelech into sin. And David, the man after God's own heart, was guilty of adultery, deceit, and murder, and also brought upon his unoffending people the anger of the Lord by his pride in seeking to know the number of the people.

The new dispensation revealed more clearly than it had been revealed before *that* righteousness which is *imputed* to us, that is, reckoned to our account, not because of our faith, but because of the merits of Christ, who fulfilled all righteousness. Faith is the means or condition necessary for our becoming partakers of a righteousness not our own. But faith is in no sense the cause or reason of our being justified; we owe that to the free grace of God.

God,[1] seeing all the human race lost without remedy on the first view of justification—that of keeping the law—has proposed a new scheme, of which the character differs essentially from that of the ancient one—that is, salvation by grace. In this design, Jesus Christ, Son of God, and nevertheless Son of Man, coming on the earth in human form, accomplishes all the law, and so merits eternal life. Then He places Himself between sinful man and the holy God. The sins of man do not ascend to God; they stop in Jesus Christ. The holiness of God does not descend to man; *it*, too, stops in Jesus Christ. There these two irreconcilable enemies, holiness and sin, meet; and from their encounter arises a fearful storm, which bursts entirely on the head of the Mediator. By that, God is appeased in His feelings towards man, and He will treat him henceforth as if he were as holy as Jesus Christ Himself.

But this salvation is not for all; it is only for those who believe in Christ—that is to say, for those who, abandoning all hopes of salvation arising out of themselves, and placing them entirely on Jesus Christ, receive Him as their Saviour in the same way that a man who is at the point of drowning grasps at the hand which is extended to draw him out. God is willing to pardon the sinner, but not to admit anything sinful into His kingdom. So, not to leave His work incomplete, the Almighty confers a second boon, the change of heart, which produces a new life, so different from the

[1] Adolphe Monod. Sermons. Première Série, No. IV. "La sanctification par le salut gratuit."

former one, that the passage from one to the other is called birth.

St. Paul states very clearly in what, under the new dispensation, consists the righteousness of the servants of God. In his Epistle to the Romans (iv. 5) he writes, "To him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness." And he quotes a passage of the thirty-second Psalm, where David says, "Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord will not impute sin." It is to be remarked here that the non-imputation of sin is represented as equivalent to the imputation of righteousness. The two are convertible terms. Those whom God accepts, those whom He treats as if they were righteous, are forgiven sinners, not self-justified saints.

The justification of which the apostle speaks is complete as an acquittal—as you have recently heard, "God blotteth out our offences for His name's sake." He "purges us with hyssop that we may be clean," He washes us that we may be whiter than snow. No one, after the sentence of pardon has gone forth, has a right to accuse the forgiven sinner; as St. Paul writes,[1] "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?" Who, indeed, shall dare to accuse those whom God acquits? Who is there to condemn, when He who died for us, and rose again, is no less than Christ the Son of God?

On these and similar passages of Scripture is based the eleventh article of our Church, which declares that

[1] Rom. viii. 33.

"we are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings," wherefore, it continues, "that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and full of comfort." Full of comfort it certainly is to the sinner, who can make no pretence to any meritorious acts of obedience. Full of comfort also to the recent convert, whose only righteousness is possessed by him in respect of faith.

The controversy between Luther and the Church of Rome on this point is one of the most remarkable chapters in the history of the Church. When he had apprehended the vital doctrine of remission of sins through Christ alone, a new light flashed upon him. "Henceforth," he said, "I felt myself a new man, and all the Scriptures appeared to have a new face. The expression, 'righteousness of God,' now became as sweet to my mind as it was hateful before, and the words of St. Paul, against which my heart had risen up in a silent sort of blasphemy, proved to me the entrance into Paradise."

The doctrine of justification through faith alone has often been abused, and charges of antinomianism, or indifference to personal holiness, have been brought against the Reformers, and those who hold the doctrine in our day. Against these abuses St. Paul's epistles contain suitable cautions, and the charges of antinomianism have been met by argument, and by a reference to the lives of Protestants. There can be no doubt that the Reformation introduced a purer mode of life, and a

higher standard of morality, not merely by the access to the Word of God, which was then secured, but also by the clearer statement of the true way of salvation, and by the renouncing of the view acted upon by the Papal Church, which mixed up faith and works as the conditions of our justification.

In our days it is not uncommon to hear objections urged against the doctrines of justification, arising on the one hand from a view of God's justice, and on the other from a view of man's personal condition.

I. It is often asked, "Can God esteem us to be other than we are?" "Can He, knowing us to be sinners, account us righteous and holy?" The answer to these questions is perfectly plain. God is omniscient, and must know the character of our faith. The twelfth article describes faith as the root of righteousness: and there can be no doubt but that God's estimate will accord with the fact.[1] But we must not presume to lay down laws upon which the righteous God is to act. We must bear in mind the limited and fallible nature of human knowledge. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord?" We may, in our presumption, judging merely as men, ascribe wrongly motives to God, which have no place in the Divine economy. We know that God looked upon the works of Cornelius with favour; and, for all that we know, God's judgment of human conduct may embrace principles which go further than His revelation. But that which is revealed in His Word is all with which we have to do as necessary for salvation.

[1] Knox's Remains, vol. i. p. 292 (3rd ed. 1844), on Justification.

The text teaches us to look to God as the source of all spiritual strength—as the author of a new being. He who would be saved must first come to God that he may be quickened. He will then admit him into spiritual life, for Christ's sake.

II. As regards ourselves, it is often asked by those who are taught to look upon themselves as utterly helpless, unable of themselves to do any good, and who cannot reconcile with this teaching such precepts as our Lord's—"Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."—"Are we to cast away all hope for, all desire after, righteousness?" It would be lamentable if it were so; for if the Christian alone has no standard of perfection before his eyes, his spiritual growth will be stunted and dwarfed. But we must not seek to invert the order of God's dealings with the soul.

In[1] the first instance, we are to come as weak, that we may be strengthened; as empty, that we may be filled; as having nothing of our own, that we may rest solely on God's fulness of grace and mercy. He who approaches God's mercy-seat is to annex a high idea to the faith he looks for, rather than to the faith which he possesses. But we may raise our aims and aspirations very high in aiming at a higher righteousness than ours. This is the purpose of God—"He hath made Him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

Difficulties of the kind alluded to are much less likely to perplex us if we keep before our minds clearly

[1] Knox's Remains, vol. i. p. 294.

the distinction between justification and sanctification. We may regard them in two points of view.

1st as acts. Justification (δικαίωσις) is the pronouncing of a sentence of acquittal *in foro Dei*, at the justice-seat of God. This, from its nature, must be complete as it must be immediate. Sanctification (ἁγιασμός) is "making holy" by the operation of the grace of God upon the heart of man. This, from its nature, must be a process of time, and gradual or progressive.

2d as states. Justification is sometimes put, incorrectly as to language, for the state of the righteous; whilst sanctification is put for the state of the holy. The exact meaning of the two terms may be gathered from two passages. The first is from the Sermon on the Mount. Our Lord says, "He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain upon the just and upon the unjust." Here we have two degrees of good and evil—on the one hand *good*, and, lower in the scale, *just:* on the other *evil*, and, lower again in the scale, *unjust*. The second is in Revelations.[1] "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Here you will observe again a similar gradation—from unjust to filthy—from righteous to holy.

There is, besides the word δικαίωσις, a word which properly signifies righteousness, δικαιοσύνη. This is the word used by St. Matthew where[2] he records

[1] xxii. 11. [2] v. 20.

the words of Jesus. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." We have seen that the newly converted believer and the sinner can have no claim to any righteousness at all, save that which is imputed to him through faith. It is the gift of God. So also of any inherent righteousness. It is implanted in the heart by God. It is the natural fruit of faith, working by love. It does not constitute our claim of acceptance before God, for we are told distinctly that "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."[1] A passage which, whilst it denies any merit or deserving to good works, seems to speak quite as much of an internal change as of an external act.

Therefore, it will appear that we may give due weight to imputative, or forensic righteousness, as it is sometimes called, without denying the existence of a corresponding moral righteousness: and we may assume the existence of the latter—moral righteousness implanted in us, and fostered by the Holy Spirit—without reckoning on it, as a plea for salvation; as St. Paul says[2] "I am conscious to myself of nothing, yet am I not hereby justified, but He that judgeth me is the Lord."

To sum up briefly what has been said respecting the Church of England's doctrine about Justification by Faith. It is not liable to the charge of Antinomianism: it is the only view of obtaining salvation which

[1] Titus iii. 5. [2] 1 Cor. iv. 4.

gives the sinner any hope ; and even the most righteous and holy of men, whose righteousness and holiness we need not deny, owe both their present state, and their hopes of eternal salvation equally to the mercy of God.

If God had determined to save us without any act on our part, or even in spite of our sins ; if nothing that could be called satisfaction had ever been offered to Him ; who could presume to question the power and right of the Almighty to do what He wills with His own ? But God has admitted us to a nearer participation of His counsels than this. He has opened to us a view of His dealings with the human race as regards their final salvation, which is in accordance with, and not a violation of, the sense of moral justice which He has implanted in us.

The law of God has not been *wholly* violated. Christ has fulfilled the requirements of that law once for all. And we are admitted to union with Him through faith. We become one with Him, who is perfectly righteous, and *thus* righteous in the sight of God. Whatever degree of personal holiness the servants of God may be permitted to attain to, depend upon it that it will be higher, and not lower, in proportion to their endeavour to look out of themselves and look to Jesus.

It is a thing to be prayed for, and earnestly striven for, that we should not only be *called* the righteousness of God in Christ, but that we should attain to great likeness to Him, and that the righteousness of God—the holiness of Him who is holy—may dwell in us by the Holy Spirit.

It is a thing to call forth our grateful and adoring praise, that One who has borne our human nature, and can sympathise with our weakness, is exalted to the right hand of the Majesty on high, having fulfilled all righteousness, and having placed us on a vantage-ground which we could never have won for ourselves.

God grant, that the name whereby the prophet announced the coming Messiah, may become to us a reality. May He, the glorified Messiah, be indeed our righteousness. If He be so; if we are rooted and grounded in Him; no dangers need appal us, no disappointments cast us down, no trials and persecutions vex us—for he who has the Lord for his righteousness, has also the Lord for his strength.

[*25th Sunday after Trinity*, 1861.]

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